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PALÆMON'S C R E E D REVIEWED AND EXAMINED:

WHEREIN

Several gross and dangerous Errors, advanced by the Author of the *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, are detected and refuted;

A N D

The Protestant Doctrine concerning the *Covenant of Works* and the *Covenant of Grace*, *Corruption of Sin*, *Regeneration*, *Faith*, *Justification*, *Inherent Grace*, &c. vindicated from the Cavils and Exceptions of that Author, and shown to be entirely conformable to the Apostolic Doctrine concerning the several Points afore-mentioned.

I N T W O V O L U M E S .

By DAVID WILSON.

— Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, Jude, ver. 3.

V O L . II.

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АИОМЕЛАЧ СЕДЕРЯ

РЕВИАНДАМАНИНДИ

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бюджета, включая расходы на содержание и управление имущества, а также на выплату заработной платы и других расходов, связанных с исполнением бюджета.



Бюджетный документ, подтверждающий правильность и полноту отражения в нем фактических данных о расходах бюджета на выполнение задач, определенных в соответствующем законе.

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Third was of course the second edition of the new
— and of **ARTICLE X.** of his system
— and of this part much later, indeed, heavier has
concerned — R E M A R K S. —
— about mean of other parts, and has led to
atmospheric view of Palamedes in opposition to that great

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— a well-satisfied account of some plain facts re-
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— This option showed to be entirely unsupported by
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which —*

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P A L E.

PALÆMON'S CREED

Reviewed and Examined.

ARTICLE X.

THE promise, call, or testimony of God in the gospel, do no more lay a foundation for any assurance, or hope of salvation to sinners, for whose benefit they are published, than the secret purpose of God: for men have as good reason to believe their election to everlasting life, as to believe on Jesus Christ for life and salvation, or indeed to believe that they shall reap any benefit by his righteousness and death.

REMARKS.

HOWEVER extravagant this supposition is, it must be acknowledged to be a native consequence of the strange opinion expressed in the last article of our author's creed formerly considered, namely, that there are no promises, or offers, of grace made to sinners in the gospel; what is proposed to them therein as the immediate ground of justifying faith being only a well-attested account of some plain facts recorded in the New Testament, particularly the death and resurrection of Christ;

2 PALÆMON's CREED Art. X.

or some general propositions which bear no particular aspect towards guilty sinners, so as to lay any foundation for faith or an assured hope of salvation through Jesus Christ : which last is only acquired by a believer and lover of the truth in the way of *painful desire and fear*, or after he has been for some time employed in a course of self-denied obedience.

This notion being the foundation upon which most of those wild imaginations, and perverse reasonings against what is called the popular doctrine, that we meet with in the *letters on Theron, &c.* are built, we have already taken some pains to shew the absurdity of it. And indeed it is so contrary to Scripture, and particularly to the whole tenor of the apostolic writings, that one may well be surprised, that any who profess to own their authority should have had the impudence to affirm it. For as it is entirely repugnant to many express declarations and testimonies of Scripture, and the very reverse of the apostolic doctrine ; so, to assert it is evidently to counteract the great end and design of the gospel, which is to lay a sure foundation for the *faith and hope* of guilty sinners, who have nothing in or about themselves, and can do as little, to recommend them to God.

According to the letter-writer's reasoning upon this subject, the gospel, however firmly believed, leaves men as much in the dark as to the remission of their sins and their own particular salvation, as ever they were. So that if ever they attain to any perfusion or personal hope of the forgiveness of sins and their own salvation ; these, having no foundation in the divine promises or testimony in the gospel, must be wholly bottomed upon some works done by, or qualifications found in them ; or, to speak in our author's dialect, upon

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upon their own love to the truth, acts of faith, and self-denied obedience. Thus, after all his high pretensions to zeal for the article of *imputed righteousness*, and the doctrine of justification by grace without the works of the law ; and after many turnings and windings, and going about and about, till we suppose neither he himself, nor any one else knows what he is about, or whereabouts he is ; he comes at last to fix in plain Popery, or downright Socinianism, by maintaining in effect, that men obtain the forgiveness of sins, or are justified and saved, not freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, or on account of his perfect law magnifying righteousness imputed to them and received by faith alone, but by their own faith and good works, or obedience to the commands of Christ.

But as we may have occasion to examine this leading part of our author's scheme, in which the whole does evidently terminate, more fully afterwards, at present we shall only offer a few remarks on the article under consideration.

And it might suffice to observe, that, as it is built upon an hypothesis manifestly false, and which we have already shewed to be quite contrary to the whole tenor of the apostolic doctrine, his impertinent cavils and sophistical reasonings against the Protestant, which he styles the *popular doctrine*, in relation to this subject, deserve no manner of notice. But that the reader may have a more full view of the ungenerous and wretched artifices by which this author endeavours to darken and pervert the gospel of Christ, and pour contempt upon the memory of those eminent divines, and excellent preachers, who have been most active and zealous in maintaining the purity and promoting the interests thereof ; we shall take notice of a few passages in his letters relating to the subject now under consideration,

4 PALÆMON's CREED Art. X.

sideration, in which he shews his impotent malice and disgust at the true doctrine of the grace of God, as much as any where else.

Because those whom he calls the popular preachers, mindful of the scriptural maxim, that *secret things belong unto God, but the things that are revealed unto us* *, have frequently in their sermons exhorted their hearers to beware of prying unseasonably, and too curiously into the divine decrees ; an exercise which the grand enemy of mankind is very ready to prompt sinners to, as soon as they begin to have any serious thoughts about religion and the state of their souls, that he may detain them in bondage to their own perplexing fears, and drive them to despair, or at least overwhelm them with discouragement, and thus divert them from their proper exercise and present duty, which is to believe on the name of the Son of God, and obey the call, or rather embrace the promise of the gospel, which brings glad tidings of great joy to all people ; this capricious author would have us believe, that in this manner they have shewed their disgust at the doctrine of the divine sovereignty manifested in the choice of a certain number of mankind to everlasting life, without any regard to those distinctions between one man and another which are apt to administer food for human pride : as every one is ready to imagine there is, or must be, something about himself which may give him ground to presume, that the Deity regards him more than others.

This charge he attempts to prove in the following extraordinary manner. " If we observe," says he, " the artifices of the popular preachers, we shall find them likewise denying THE GOD THAT IS ABOVE. Yet this hated article of the

" sovereignty of the divine choice, will ever be held most sacred by all who love the ancient gospel. To them it is highly acceptable, because they know, that there was no occasion for such sovereignty to appear, but that grace might be shewn to the worthless. They know, that otherwise all mankind without distinction had perished, according to every rule of equity.

" The popular preachers are greatly disgusted at this doctrine, because, according to their own style, " *here is no visible ground for faith to rest upon.*" — Here no man's pride is flattered; no man can find any ground to presume, that the Deity regards him more than others. Therefore, while they are busy in stimulating their hearers to the exercise of faith, they are at great pains to keep this doctrine as far removed from their thoughts as possible. But when once the hearers, by their assistance, have prepared some ground for faith to rest upon, then they are freely allowed to solace themselves with the doctrine of election, because they have now acquired some reason why God in his choice should respect them more than others. — This is a very nice part of the popular doctrine. Here the preacher finds use for all his artifice, and is obliged to employ his utmost dexterity in shifting hands*."

Here, methinks, instead of reasoning, we have downright raving; *Quot verba tot fere mendacia,* so many lies so many lies, and all affirmed with as much confidence as if they were undoubted truths. Here one can hardly forbear exclaiming—*What shall be given unto thee? or, what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?* &c. † Some worthy

* Letters, p. 347, 348.

† Psal. cxx. 3.

preachers, yea all I know of who deserve that character, have warned their hearers against an unseasonable and preposterous meddling with the secrets of God, those eternal counsels and purposes which he hath seen meet to conceal from men, till they are manifested in the execution; because thereby they are apt to be diverted from their proper exercise, and hardened in their disbelief of the testimony and record of God concerning his Son in the gospel: therefore they hate the doctrine of the divine sovereignty. They maintain, as every one who knows what he says doubtless must do, that the secret purposes of God concerning the final state of individuals belonging to the human race being altogether hid till they are made known by their effects, can neither be a *ground* of faith nor the *rule* of duty; but that the *word*, *promise*, *call*, and *testimony* of God in the gospel, do at once point out to men their *duty*, and lay a sure foundation for their *faith*: therefore, if we may believe our author, they endeavour to keep the doctrine of election as far removed from the thoughts of their hearers as possible, till they have prepared *some ground* for faith to rest upon, and acquired *some reason* why God in his choice should respect them more than others.

This must be acknowledged to be a very strange method of reasoning. We must suppose one that is capable of reasoning, or, to speak as the thing is, running at this rate, either to be void of common understanding, or to have no regard for truth or common honesty. In short, we must conclude, that he is either destitute of common sense or a man of no conscience; who cares not what he says, provided he imagines it will any way make for his purpose; or, which perhaps may come as near the truth, that he must be under the influence of some strong distemper, possibly, a fever of envy and malice,

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lice, which has put his blood and spirits into such a ferment, and so disturbed his imagination, that he cannot forbear uttering such dotages and wild reveries, as every sober man would be ashamed of.

When this author tells us, that the popular preachers are greatly disgusted at the doctrine of the divine sovereignty appearing in the choice of some to everlasting life, who have nothing about them that can be a reason why the Deity should regard them more than others; and affirms, that those preachers, while they are busy in stimulating their hearers to the exercise of faith, endeavour to keep this doctrine as far removed from their thoughts as possible, it is not easy to know what he means. I suppose, bold as he is, he will hardly venture to say, that they are greatly disgusted at the doctrine of election itself, or that ever they endeavour to remove this from the thoughts of their hearers. He knows that this they assert, and strenuously maintain, wherever they have occasion to mention it. And I believe it will be difficult for him to produce any one passage from the writings and sermons of those excellent men * whose doctrine he endeavours to expose on this head, that but seems to give the least countenance to that unscriptural and wild notion he would charge them with; namely, that the election of men to everlasting life is founded on some endeavours of their own, or on some good qualifications about them, the foresight of which was the reason why God in his choice regarded them more than others.

These men, far from denying or corrupting the doctrine of election, as *Palemn* falsely insinuates they did, only warned their hearers against making a bad improvement of it, by too curiously prying

* Mr. *Benson* and *Brake*.

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into the decrees and secret purposes of God with respect to themselves ; as if the knowledge of their own election was necessary in order to lay a foundation for their faith of the divine promise ; or as if it were the duty of those only who know they are elected, to believe on Jesus Christ for life and salvation. Now, when they gave their hearers cautions of this nature, did they any more than inculcate a truth plainly taught in Scripture, namely, that *secret things belong unto God, &c.*? Will Palemon affirm, that any man may be assured of his election to everlasting life before he believes in Christ ? or, will he say, that no man ought to believe, or bottom his hopes of acceptance with God upon the righteousness and blood of Christ, till he is assured of his election. If he can affirm neither the one nor the other, he must grant, that the call and command of God make it not only warrantable, but the indispensable duty of all who hear the gospel to believe on Christ for salvation before they have, or can have any certain knowledge of their own election. To what purpose then is all his wrangling on this head ?

Whatever we suppose justifying faith to be, doubtless men must be possessed of it, before they can be assured of their election ; and it is equally certain, that the message of grace and salvation published in the gospel, is not directed to the *elect* only, much less to them who already know they are such, but to *all* in general. It is what the gospel reveals about Christ, his perfect righteousness and atoning sacrifice, that sinners have only to do with at first instance. This is true according to the principles of the letter-writer himself, if it can be supposed he has any. With what face then can he charge his opponents with *misleadings* & *evil over the eyes* of the people, by distinguishing betwixt the *word, promise,*

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mise, call, or testimony, and the purpose of God? He must either affirm, that the word and testimony of God in the gospel lays no sure foundation for faith, and consequently, that every man must have a certain knowledge of his own election before he believes in Christ, or ought to do so; or allow that a sinner in believing must immediately have an eye to the *testimony and record of God in the gospel* — without curiously prying into the decrees of *election and reprobation*: which must be acknowledged to be altogether unprofitable; as a man can never know his own election, but by his effectual calling, or actual believing, which are the fruits of it.

If *Palæmon* should maintain the former, he would contradict his own hypothesis no less than the popular doctrine: for he supposes justifying faith to be the *belief of a testimony*; that is, as I take it, of something that God has revealed and declared, or made known concerning Christ, his righteousness and the atonement he has made, which the guilty must in such a manner give credit to as to bottom their hopes of acceptance with God and confidence before him, wholly upon the same, or they can have no benefit by the gospel; and no persuasion of their own particular election, which all must acknowledge to be an absolute secret till they believe. And I should think it requires no great subtlety; nor am I liable to see how it can throw a veil upon the eyes of any body, to distinguish betwixt what is clearly revealed and made known, and what is altogether concealed and kept secret. If our author should grant the latter of the suppositions formerly mentioned, the popular preachers and he will be at least so far agreed; and he must distinguish betwixt the *testimony of God revealed in the gospel and his eternal purpose concerning the salvation of particular persons, as well as they.*

Thus, when *Palæmon* censures the popular preachers for what they teach in relation to this subject, he equally condemns himself. And indeed so unhappy is this writer, that, unless where he pours forth his fulsome reproaches and blasphemies against the power and practice of godliness, there is scarce any censure he passes on his antagonists, that does not strike equally against himself, with regard to some one or other of the notions which he has woven into his extraordinary scheme of divinity.

When our author censures his opponents for distinguishing betwixt the *promise*, or *testimony*, and the *purpose* of God, as if this last wore a more forbidding aspect than the former, he gives such a reason for the distinction as I suppose they never dreamed of; for they could never imagine, that the purpose of God concerning a man's particular election, wears either a more or less forbidding aspect than his promise, call, or testimony in the gospel; because, the truth is, with regard to an unbelieving sinner, it wears no aspect at all, being an absolute secret till he believes. What is not at all cannot be said to have either a forbidding or inviting aspect; and in this case, *non apparentum, vel incognitorum, & non existentium eadem est ratio*.*

The only observation amidst the jumble of imminencies which *Palæmon* has thrown together on this subject, that seems to have any shew of reason or truth, is, "That the divine word *promise*, *call*, or *testimony*, leaves it as much a secret who shall be saved, as the doctrine of the divine pur-

* Things that appear not, or are wholly unknown, having no real influence they can have upon the human mind, are the same as if they were not.

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" pose or election does." This is a piece of sophistry by which he endeavours to impose upon weak minds, and make his extravagant notions concerning the matter under consideration appear the more plausible; but it is easy to perceive that it is only a silly, impertinent cavil, which scarce deserves any notice. The divine *word, promise, call or testimony*, leaves it a secret who shall be saved; or, which is the same thing, who shall believe, so as to obtain salvation. Who doubts it? But what is this to the purpose? Did ever those eminent preachers whose doctrine the letter-writer has thought fit to attack, affirm, that there is any thing in the *word, promise, or testimony* of God, assuring any man before he believes, or without any regard to his faith, that he shall be saved; or, which comes all to one, that he shall be saved whether he believes or not; or that God has determined infallibly to work faith in him? But do not the *word and promise* of God afford every sinner of mankind who hears the gospel, sufficient *warrant* to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation, and assure him, that every one who thus believes and rests his hope of salvation wholly upon the divine *word, promise or testimony* concerning Christ, shall undoubtedly be saved? And is it not then abundantly evident, that the *word and promise* of God, or the record he has given of his Son published in the gospel, lays a sure foundation for the faith and certain hope of salvation, with regard to every lost sinner who hears the gospel? But this is what the *secret purpose* of God, or the *doctrine of election*, neither does nor can do.

The promises of grace published in the gospel as a ground of faith to guilty perishing sinners, are not *absolute predictions* of what will infallibly take place with respect to any sinner; but in them God makes a *free offer* of life and salvation to *all* to whom

whom the gospel comes ; and this gives them sufficient warrant to receive the *gift* : which is done by crediting or being persuaded of the *truth* of the promise. Hence we find, that a *receiving of Christ* and *believing on his name*, in Scripture, denote one and the same thing.

The receiving of Christ, as we formerly had occasion to observe, necessarily supposes a *giving* of him prior to that *receiving*. Now he is given in, and by the promise ; or the *promise* as made to unbelieving sinners, is a *giving* of Christ ; and therefore it can never be truly believed, but in the way of *receiving* him, and life and salvation through him, as the *gift* of God to them. And as it is impossible, in the nature of the thing, that a man can enjoy, possess, or have any benefit by a gift, unless he receives it ; so no sinner can have any benefit by the promises of the gospel, but by believing and being persuaded of the truth of them, with particular application to himself *.

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* Here it is proper to observe, that the divine testimony, which is the immediate ground of faith, and is implied in every promise of the gospel directed to sinners, respects not only the *truth*, but also the *good*, of the promise ; not only ascertains the *reality*, but bears witness to the *excellency and suitability* of the gift exhibited therein ; and therefore when it is really believed, the understanding is not only perfused of the *truth*, but the will embraces the *good* of the promise. Hence no sooner is any sinner enabled to believe the promise of salvation through Christ, than the heart and affections are made to flow out towards and center in him, as a satisfying portion, as well as an all-sufficient Saviour. This was exemplified in the case of those worthies we read of, Phil. iii. 13. who were not only *perfused* of the promises, but *enraptured* them ; and also in the experience

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We just now observed, that there must be a *giving* of Christ before there can be a *receiving* of him; and that a receiving of him, in the very nature of the thing, supposes a *giving* of him in the first place: and it is equally true, that there may be a *giving* where there is no *receiving* of him; otherwise none could be said to *reject* him by their unbeliefs. And as those who *reject* a gift freely offered to them, are justly denied the benefit of it; so they who disbelieve the promise of God, and thus despise the *gift* exhibited therein, come short of the blessings promised, without derogating in the least from the divine faithfulness and veracity pledged in the promise. For no promise of the gospel imports, that sinners shall have life and salvation by Christ whether they believe or not; but only that *in believing* the promise they shall certainly obtain the blessings promised; or that thereupon the full accomplishment of the promise shall be infallibly secured to them: and thus the promise never fails to have an accomplishment. And still it may be said, that the *unbelief* of sinners does not make the *faith* of God of none effect: for though men by their unbelief come short of the blessings promised, none can have any reason to impeach the divine faithfulness, or conclude that it is unsafe to trust the divine promise upon that account; because it still holds true, that *he that believeth shall be saved.*

It is a certain truth, that God promises, or makes a free offer of the remission of sins and eternal salvation, to all those who are truly converted to him, and to the spouse, who not only repaid herself under the shadow of the blessed *apple-tree*, by relying upon the promise of justification and salvation through the righteousnesses of Christ, but fed sweetly on its fruits, which intimates her delight and satisfaction in the person of Christ, with the pleasure and refreshment afforded her by the fruits of his purchase, *Can. ii. 3..*

14. PALÆMON's CREEED Art. X.

tion through Jesus Christ, to all the hearers of the gospel, whether they believe it or not. Therefore so far do we agree with *Palæmon*, when he affirms, " That the gospel proposes nothing to be believed by us, but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not ; and that our unbelief cannot make the faith, or veracity of God of none effect ; and that not one of his words shall fall to the ground *." But if any should from these infer, that the gospel does not afford sufficient warrant, or lay a foundation for believing any thing, but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not ; this we must beg leave to deny. For as God in the gospel freely promises, or makes an offer of life and salvation to sinners through Jesus Christ, it is evident the promise cannot be believed, but in the way of appropriating the gift, or believing that they shall be saved through his blood : which certainly cannot be said to be a truth, whether they believe it or not ; for if it was, all who hear the gospel would infallibly be saved.

The matter is plainly this : the gospel no where proposes it as a truth to be believed, That men shall be saved through Christ, whether they believe or not ; but it every where testifies, That *he* that believeth shall be saved. Now this very declaration published, and frequently repeated in the gospel for the encouragement of sinners, makes it warrantable for every one of them to believe his own particular salvation through Christ. And the truth is, till he believes this upon the footing of the divine promise, faithfulness, or veracity, he in effect, really and in the sense of the Scripture, disbelieves and calls in question the truth of the divine testimony made known in the proposition more-mentioned. That

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he does so, evidently appears by his not crediting it, so as to rest his hope of salvation wholly upon the promise of God, and the record which he has given of his Son, in the gospel.

It will not be denied, that the gospel declares Christ to be an *all-sufficient* Saviour, and bears testimony to his righteousness as every way *sufficient* for the justification of the most guilty sinner. This we are sure *Palæmon* cannot refuse, who so often affirms that righteousness to be the *sole requisite* to justification, ‘*the one thing needful, &c.*’ Now the question is, Whether he who is enabled so far to credit what is revealed and declared in the gospel concerning this righteousness, as to rely *wholly* upon it for justification and salvation; or he who reckons it unsafe to venture his acceptance with God and eternal salvation on that bottom, without being conscious of some *personal righteousness*, or good qualifications about himself, on which he may found his hopes of pardon and salvation, may be said to believe the divine testimony concerning Christ and his righteousness? Our author answers this question to our satisfaction in the following manner.

“ If one approaching to a frozen lake or river, “ over which he has occasion to pass, tells me, “ that he has been assured, by good information, “ that the ice was sufficiently strong to support “ him; and yet, after all, proves timorous, and “ averse to make the trial, by venturing his person “ freely upon it: I plainly perceive he has no faith “ in the report he heard; because he does not “ trust in it, or, which is the same thing, he can- “ not trust, rely, confide in, or venture himself “ on the ice*.”

* Letters, p. 374.

If there is any force in this reasoning, it must undoubtedly prove, that none can be laid to believe the report of the gospel concerning the righteousness of Christ, but those who, without being conscious of any personal merit or good qualifications about themselves, rely firmly and wholly upon that righteousness for justification and salvation. And it is equally certain, that such a firm reliance, or fiduciary recumency upon the righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel, must, in the very nature of the thing, imply the faith of one's own justification and salvation through this righteousness; or a believing, that in Christ he has redemption through his blood, ~~and~~ the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; or, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus he shall be saved *. For a man to venture himself, and all his most valuable interests, upon a bottom that he doubts is weak and insufficient to support him, would be the greatest folly imaginable; yet this he must do who pretends to rely wholly upon Christ and his righteousness for justification and salvation, and yet has not the faith of his own salvation †. Whoever has assured him that he may with safety venture his soul and eternal salvation upon that bottom, so far as he doubts of his salvation, he evidently questions the truth of the report, and the veracity of him that made it.

Palemon has afforded us a very familiar and plain illustration of this matter in the *simile* formerly mentioned.

* Ephes. i. 7. Acts xv. 11. In some degree. For it is evident, that, in this case, a persuasion of what the gospel testifies concerning the sufficiency of the divine righteousness for the ends and purposes above-mentioned, and the faith of one's own salvation, are so intimately connected, that the one cannot be without the other; but the latter is still proportionable to the former.

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mentioned. If a man has been assured, by good information, that the ice of any frozen lake or river he has occasion to pass over, is sufficiently strong to support him; and yet is timorous, and doubts whether he will be safe, if he should venture upon it; it is plain he does not confide in, or give credit to the report he heard: for if he did, supposing the information to be good, and, much more, allowing it to be infallible, he would be as much assured of his own safety, as of the truth of the report, or the veracity of him that made it. The application is easy.

Upon the whole, it is evident, that till a man believes, and is in some measure assured of *his own* justification and salvation through the righteousness and blood of Christ, he never truly believes the report of the gospel, or the divine testimony concerning the same. Let the reader then judge whether there is any truth or sense in *Palamon's* assertion formerly taken notice of, that the hearers of the gospel have no warrant to believe any thing but what is infallibly true whether they believe it or not.

When a man who has occasion to pass over a frozen lake or river, is assured, by good information, that the ice is strong enough to support him; he has, doubtless, equal reason to believe, that inventuring upon it he shall be safe; and if he acts rationally, his hazarding himself upon this bottom is built upon a persuasion of his future safety in doing so. Just so it is with regard to the matter under consideration. When the gospel bears testimony to the sufficiency of Christ and his righteousness, and calls men wholly to rely upon the same for justification and salvation, without all question, it lays a solid and sure foundation for the faith and full assurance of their own salvation; yet it cannot be said to be a truth that they shall be saved whether

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they believe or not; even as, in the case aforementioned, it cannot be said, that the ice will actually support a man, and afford him a safe passage over a river or lake in his way, whether he ventures upon it or not. For it is evident, that if he does not venture upon it, neither the strength of the ice nor the report concerning it can be of the least advantage to him.

If a man offers me a gift freely, I have certainly a warrant to receive it, and in receiving it to believe it is mine. And if the donor is a person of unquestionable veracity, I have equal reason to believe and be assured, that it will fully answer the purposes for which it is given. In this case I have a sufficient warrant to believe, that I shall enjoy the benefit of it: but will any say it is infallibly true, that I shall do so, whether I credit the word of my benefactor so as to accept of the gift, or not.

When God gave the children of *Israel* a promise of entering into the land of *Canaan*, I presume it will not be denied, that they had not only a warrant, but that it was their indispensable duty to believe, that he would bring them to the possession of it notwithstanding the difficulties they might have to encounter by the way;—yet it cannot be said it was infallibly true, that they should enter into the promised land whether they believed or not; for the event proved the contrary *. It is evident then, that

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* One Mr. *Bellamy*, of *Bethlem*, in *New England*, endeavours to invalidate the argument drawn from this pretence which God made to *Israel*, to prove that men may have sufficient warrant to believe what is not infallibly true whether they believe or not, or antecedent to their believing, by alledging that God's promise to bring the *Israelites* to *Canaan*, did not absolutely oblige him to bring every individual among them thither.—And hence

they were called to believe something that was not infallibly true whether they believed it or not: for it was only in the way of believing the promise they

had

hence he concludes, that no one *in particular*, when they set out from *Egypt*, had sufficient warrant to believe, that he should enter into *Canaan*. But as I know of none who ever affirmed, that the promise which God made to the children of *Israel*, obliged him to perform it, whether they believed it or not; the question is not, whether he bound himself by his promise to bring every one of them to the land of *Canaan*? but, whether he did not give them a promise of entering into his rest, which they were bound to believe? That such a promise was given them, even to them whose carcases fell in the wilderness, cannot be doubted by any who read, and own the divine authority of the Scriptures: for God himself declares, even with respect to them who were not permitted to enter into the promised land because of their unbelief, that *be fware to make THEM swell therein*, Numb. xiv. 30.

The question then is, whether they were bound to believe the promise of God confirmed by an oath, or not? If it is granted they were, which I think cannot be denied, we seek no more. We do allow, that God, in his infinite wisdom, might have seen meet to take away some individuals among them before they were brought to the possession of the earthly *Canaan*, for other reasons besides their unbelief; and that particular persons among them were to believe the promise under a certain limitation, namely, that God was able to bring them to the possession of the land of *Canaan*, and would certainly do it, provided he did not see meet before-hand to translate them to the possession of the heavenly *Canaan*, of which the earthly was only a type, and promised as such. But that every individual among them was called upon the footing of the divine promise to believe, that God would certainly do the one or the other, I think is abundantly evident from the strain of the apostle's

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had any ground to expect the benefit of it. Had the promise indeed been of the nature of an absolute prediction, importing, that all the *Israelites* who came out of *Egypt* with *Moses* should infallibly be brought to the possession of the land of *Canaan* whether they believed or not, their coming short of it by perishing in the wilderness, would have been inconsistent with the divine faithfulness and veracity, and their unbelief could not have been assigned as ~~the cause of their~~ ^{the cause of their} infallible bound in respect to such a promise. The apostle's reasoning on this subject, *Heb. iii. & iv.* It is equally certain, that some, if not the far greater part of them through their unbelief, came short of the possession both of the earthly and heavenly *Canaan*. Still therefore it remains a truth, that they were called to believe something that was not infallibly true antecedent to their believing, or whether they believed or not. To affirm, with Mr. Bellamy, that not one belonging to the congregation of *Israel* was bound, or had sufficient warrant to believe, that he should enter into the promised land, notwithstanding the promise God had given them of entering into his rest, is to say in effect, that God gave a promise to the children of *Israel*, which not one of them in particular was bound to believe, or give any credit to. This methinks sounds very harsh, to say no worse of it. As to the *Israelites*, who could not enter into the promised land because of their unbelief, one thing is certain, namely, that they were called to believe something which, in regard to them, did not take effect, because they did not believe it, and which would certainly have done so had they believed it; for this apostle intimates, that a promise ~~was made~~ ^{was made} ~~of entering into God's rest~~, and declares that they could not enter in because of unbelief, *Heb. iii. 19.* *iv. 11.* Yet their unbelief did not make the faith of God of none effect; because in the experience of such as believed the promise, it had its due effect, and manifested the faithfulness and veracity of the great Author and Witness sufficiently manifested.

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the reason why they did not enter into the promised rest: but the apostle tells us, *they could not enter in because of unbelief* †. Hence I think we may justly infer, that God never purposed or promised, that they should enter into his rest whether they believed or not. Yet it is as evident as any thing can be, that, upon the foundation of the divine promise, they were called to believe, that they should enter into it: for what was it they were called to believe, and punished for not believing? The apostle assures us it was the *promise*, which God gave them, *of entering into his rest* ‡. Their not believing this, then, was the very reason why they could not have any experience of the truth and accomplishment of the promise, or were denied the benefit of it. This is the very thing the inspired penman of the epistle to the Hebrews affirms in other words, when he says, —*I*hey could not enter in because of unbelief.

Now, that the unbelieving *Israelites* were not permitted to enter into, and enjoy the promised rest in *Canaan*, was no way inconsistent with the divine faithfulness and veracity engaged for the accomplishment of the promise: because, as it was still an undoubted truth, that God gave them such a promise, so the promise would have been infallibly performed with regard to them, had they believed and confided in it; but otherwise they had no ground to believe, that they should enjoy the benefit of it. For the most free and absolute promise of bestowing a gift on any person, certainly, cannot oblige the maker of it to bestow the gift, whether he to whom it is made will accept of it or not, or to force it upon him whether he will or not. Now, the unbelieving *Israelites*, to whom the Lord gave the promise of entering into his rest, not only

† Heb. iii. 19.

‡ Heb. iv. 1.

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disbelieved the promise but despised the gift. Should any doubt of this, I hope the testimony of the Spirit of God will be decisive in the case, and give them full satisfaction as to the truth of what has been just now asserted, when he expressly affirms, that they *despised the pleasant land**. When they despised and rejected the pleasant land, it is evident, that God could not be charged with any unfaithfulness for not bringing them to the possession of it, however freely promised before. Yet it is observable, that the not permitting them to enter into it had some *show, or appearance of a breach of promise.* And therefore when the Lord threatened to make their carcases fall in the wilderness, it was said, they should know his *breach of promise*; that is, ‘he would so deal with them, by not permitting them to enter into the land of Canaan which he had graciously promised to give them for an inheritance, that his conduct towards them would have some *appearance of a breach of promise:*’ for it would be shocking to affirm, that it was *really* such. Yet, according to our author’s notion, we must either maintain, that God never gave them a promise of entering into his rest, or that his refusing to admit them to the possession of it was a *real* breach of promise. But to assert the former would

* Psalm cxi. 24. יְהִי אֶת-
refused, or they rejected the pleasant land. So the word is rendered, Jm. vi. 30. Isa. liv. 6. Hence it is manifest, that the *promise, or gift* of the land of Canaan, was made even to those who were not permitted to enter into it because of their unbelief; for men cannot be said to refuse, or to reject a gift that was never offered to them.

† Numb. xiv. 34.

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be directly to contradict the Scriptures, and to affirm the latter would be blasphemy.

What has been just now said with regard to the promise made to *Israel*, of entering into rest in *Canaan*, is equally true of the promise of the gospel made to sinners of mankind indefinitely. For as the promise of the earthly *Canaan*, made to the children of *Israel*, implied a promise of the heavenly *Canaan*, or everlasting happiness, through the promised *Messiah*, the apostle plainly intimates, that in the promise given them of entering into the Lord's rest, *the gospel was preached unto them*; the very same gospel that is preached unto sinners now under the New Testament. Thus, after mentioning the promise of the earthly *Canaan*, which was a type of the heavenly, and promised to *Israel* as such, he says, *Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.*

These words make it evident, that the gospel was preached to the children of *Israel* in that very promise which the Lord gave them of entering into his rest, and that the same gospel is preached unto us, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, under the Christian economy. Unto them the heavenly inheritance, under the type of the earthly, was freely promised through the *Messiah* who was to come; and the same inheritance is freely promised to us, without the intervention of any such type, through Jesus Christ already come in the flesh. This the apostle *Paul* expressly declares in other words, when he says, *The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord**. Thus God hath left, or given to all who hear the gospel a promise of entering into his rest in heaven; which gives every one of them a sufficient warrant to believe, that through the righ-

* Rom. vi. 23.

teousness and grace of the Lord Jesus he shall be saved, in the method and order God has prescribed; not while he remains in a state of sin and alienation from God, but by being first sanctified, and made meet to be a partaker of the heavenly inheritance, and afterwards in God's own time admitted to the full possession of it. Yet notwithstanding this free promise of eternal life made to sinners through Jesus Christ, there is still a probability of coming short by unbelief, as did the far greater part of those who came out of *Egypt* with *Moses*, in regard to the earthly *Canaan*.

I know the letter-writer will be ready to tell us, that the promise of entering into that rest which the apostle speaks of, respects believers only, and not sinners and hearers of the gospel indefinitely: but from the strain of the apostle's reasoning it is evident, that the promise is made to them who are in hazard of losing the benefit of it; yea in no less danger of coming short by their unbelief, than the *Israelites* were, the greatest number of whom did actually come short of the promised rest in *Canaan*. It is supposed, that in some of those to whom the promise is made, there may be an evil heart of unbelief; or, which in this case is doubtless the same thing, that they may remain under the power of unbelief, departing farther and farther from the living God, so as really to come short of eternal life, the promised rest; which can never be affirmed of true believers who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*. — But we need not spend time in proving, that the promise the apostle speaks of, is not peculiar to believers, but common to the hearers of the gospel, since it is abundantly evident, that it is the same with that which the

* 1 Pet. i. 5.

apostle

apostle Peter declares to be *unto all without exception; to all that are afar off,* sinners of all nations, *even to as many as the Lord our God shall call**: and the same that the apostle John speaks of when he says, *This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*†. In these words the great New Testament promise, the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, which is the very sum of the gospel, seems to be opposed to the promise of the earthly Canaan made to Abraham and his seed, in so far as it respected earthly or temporal blessings only. In a word, this promise is the *first and immediate foundation of faith*; and therefore so far from being peculiar to those who are already possessed of saving faith, that it is only by an *appropriating and fiducial persuasion* thereof, that any one can commence a true believer of the gospel, or attain to any certain knowledge of his eternal election.

Methinks we have already said enough, to shew the folly of those idle remarks whereby Palæmon endeavours to expose the doctrine of those whom he styles the popular preachers, by making his readers believe, that, when exhorting their hearers to the appropriating acts of faith, they urge them to believe a truth, the evidence whereof has its rise from the pains taken to believe it: which, says this Gentleman, “is indeed a very strange and “uncommon way of finding truth; and they themselves acknowledge as much while they call it, “a mystery which we cannot comprehend or account “for.” This he is pleased to call the great whirlpool of the popular doctrine, and the grand secret of manufacturing truth without evidence. But the truth is, there is no more absurdity in what his antagonists teach on this head than there is in affirming,

* Acts ii. 39. † 1 John ii. 25. † Letters, p. 26,

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that one cannot be possessed of a gift without receiving it, or that by receiving it he becomes possessed of it: for, in exact conformity to the apostolic doctrine, they maintain, that the promise of the gospel includes a free offer of life and salvation through Jesus Christ to all who hear it; and that the promise cannot be rightly believed, but in the way of receiving the gift; as, on the contrary, one cannot become possessed of the gift, or enjoy the benefit of it, but in the way of believing the promise: or, which is the same thing, that justifying and saving faith is an appropriating persuasion; so that it never becomes true, that any do actually enjoy the blessing promised, till they embrace the promise by the particular application of faith. That it never becomes theirs, so as to have the possession of it infallibly secured to them, till they receive it; though it was theirs before to claim, accept, and possess it as their own; and that by doing so the full possession of it in due time is ascertained to them, are truths set forth with as much evidence to sinners in the gospel, as that *Jesus died and rose again*. Does not the gospel constantly affirm, that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved? But does it ever teach, that any one shall be saved whether he believes or not? Now, what is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but for a guilty perishing sinner to be really persuaded, that he shall obtain life and salvation through him, on the footing of the divine promise and testimony, or that record which God has given of his Son in the gospel, so as to rest his hope of salvation wholly thereupon? In the nature of the thing, then, he must either disbelieve and reject the testimony of God concerning Christ, or believe what the gospel itself declares shall never take effect with regard to any, but those who believe it in the manner aforesaid.

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27

From what has been just now observed it is plain, that the letter-writer, by his reasonings on this subject, instead of proving the absurdity of what he calls the popular doctrine, only betrays his own ignorance, and disaffection to the true doctrine of the gospel, with his impotent malice against the preachers thereof. We must further add, that thereby he manifestly contradicts the testimony of our blessed Lord himself, who says, *Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them**.

From these words it is plain, that men may have sufficient warrant to believe some things which cannot be said to be infallibly true whether they believe them or not: for I hope it will not be alledged, that our Lord assured his disciples that they should have whatever they desired in prayer whether they believed or not; but that believing that they received it, they should have it, he expressly affirms. The things there spoken of are doubtless to be understood of things agreeable to the will of God, and that really tend to the good of his people. Now our Lord declares, that whoever shall thus pray in faith, or believe that he shall have those things which he asks from God in prayer, shall infallibly receive them. But it is far from being a truth, that he shall have them whether he believes or not: for the contrary is evidently implied in the words, and expressly asserted by the apostle James, who says, *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, bat giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;*

* Mark. xi. 23, 24.

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and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea; driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

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* Jam. i. 5, 6, 7.

Mr. Bellamy, the author of a small treatise, intituled, *Letters and Dialogues between THERON, PAULINUS, and ASPASIO*, has also thought fit to attack the old Protestant doctrine concerning the appropriation and assurance of faith, under the pretext of refuting some deceitful *Antinomian* notions, which he would have us believe are taught by the accurate and judicious Mr. Marshall in his treatise on sanctification, and the excellent Mr. Hervey in his *Theron and Aspasio*. Having in Mr. Marshall's treatise before mentioned, met with some strong expressions relating to the nature and assurance of faith, such as these: "The reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith, that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us particularly, is not, because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a certain truth when we believe it, and because it will never be true, except we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. — Neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it;" Mr. Bellamy, taking advantage of the sound, without considering the sense of the words, raises a most hideous clamour against the worthy author and his doctrine; as if Mr. Marshall, though perhaps he meant well and had an honest heart, must certainly have been a very weak man, who could teach that men may and ought to believe what they cannot know to be true by Scripture, sense, or reason, till they actually believe it.

This last assertion, which to a weak reader, who is led more by sound than sense, will doubtless appear somewhat harsh, Mr. Bellamy chimes over in almost every page; and seems confident, that it is more than sufficient to expole

It will not be alledged, I presume, that a belief of God's almighty power, or all-sufficiency to bestow whatever blessings we ask of him, is all that is

expose the excellent doctrine taught by Mr. Marshall in relation to this subject, as extremely absurd and ridiculous. And he is so charitable as to commend Mr. Marshall for being so honest and open hearted, as to expose himself in this manner. But if we might venture to deal calmly with one in such a transport of zeal against he knows not what, we would only ask him one question; and it is this: Whether a man can assure himself, either by Scripture, sense, or reason, that a gift offered him by his friend is actually in his possession before he receives it, or that he shall enjoy the benefit of it whether he receives it or not? If Mr. Bellamy should have any doubt about this, he may put the question to the first plain man he meets with, and he will resolve it. Now, should I inform the reader, that Mr. Marshall does no more, in effect, than give a negative answer to this question, I am afraid he would be apt to conclude, that not Mr. Marshall who asserts, but Mr. Bellamy who denies such a plain truth, and exclaims against it with such fervour and fury, as one of the most palpable and shocking absurdities that ever was heard of, must certainly be the weaker man; though some would call this a putting the saddle on the right horse.

Having found so little difficulty in answering the former question, we shall take the liberty to propose another; and it is this: Supposing one should freely offer me a gift, is it not abundantly evident from Scripture and reason, and common sense, that I may lawfully claim, accept, and possess it as my own; and in so doing believe that it is mine? For my part, I think it would be no error to answer this question in the affirmative. And if a receiving of Christ be the same thing with believing on his name, as the Scripture plainly intimates, I can see as little heresy or absurdity in teaching, with Mr. Marshall, that none can certainly

is meant by faith in this passage ; for none can find any great difficulty in believing that, who believe that he is at all : it must therefore, without all question,

know that they shall have life and salvation by Jesus Christ, till they believe in him ; though a persuasion of obtaining salvation by Christ is implied in the very nature of saving faith.

But perhaps Mr. Bellamy may now, in his turn, demand leave to propose a question to me ; and there is all the reason in the world he should. He will readily ask, then, Where do we find that God has made any deed of gift, or unconditional grant of spiritual blessings and eternal salvation to sinners who hear the gospel, indefinitely ? As I find he takes advantage of the ambiguity of the terms, *deed of gift* and *unconditional grant*, it will be necessary to determine the sense of these words before we make any reply to his question. By that *deed of gift* whereby Christ and spiritual blessings are made over to sinners of mankind his opponents understand not such a giving as infallibly secures the possession of them ; for they everywhere maintain that the gift may be rejected, and that by rejecting it those to whom it is made do altogether lose the benefit of it : but they affirm, that Christ and his benefits are so given in the promise of the gospel to sinners of mankind indefinitely, that every one of them has a sufficient warrant to receive, and take possession of them ; the same warrant that a hungry man has to eat the food that is set before him by his generous host, or that a thirsty man has to drink the water of a river that is running by him in the open fields.

Now to answer directly to the question : Every text in the Bible that gives perishing sinners a warrant to believe on, and receive Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, may be adduced to prove all that is meant by the *deed of gift* formerly spoken of. And methinks our Lord's words to a promiscuous multitude, the far greater part of which was made up of unbelievers, must give entire satis-

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tion, also include a *trusting* in the power and mercy of God, for the actual communication of those blessings which we ask from him in prayer ; and this, if I mistake not, must, in the nature of the

satisfaction with regard to this point. John vi. 32. *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.* As the *Mannab* of old was given to the children of *Israel*; so our blessed Saviour declares, that himself and his benefits, which without all question are meant by the true bread, are given to sinners yet in a state of unbelief; given freely and unconditionally, unless we shall say, that a free gift is given on condition he to whom it is given shall receive it ; or that when one sets food before a hungry, needy person, who has not a farthing to pay for it, he gives it him only on condition that he will eat it : which would be to affirm in effect, that there never was, nor can be any such thing as a *free gift* or *unconditional grant* of any thing : for no gift can be so free, no grant so absolute, but, in the very nature of the thing, a man must accept, before he can enjoy the benefit of it.

I find the evidence of the truth now contended for, arising from the passage above quoted, has been so strong in Mr. Bellamy's own view, that, p. 104. of his *Dialog.* &c., he is forced to grant the whole of what is contended for, and allow that all mankind, he means no doubt all who hear the gospel, have as good a warrant to receive Christ, the true bread, and eat, and live for ever, as the *Israslites* had to take and eat the *Mannab* that was rained down about their tent-doors. Thus far then he and Mr. Marshall and Hervey are agreed; for I do not find, that they have asserted any more than is necessarily implied in his own concession, though they have sometimes expressed themselves in a different manner. But if after all Mr. Bellamy will be so peevish and cross as not to call a *free gift* a *free gift*, nor allow that the receiving and appropriating of it are one and the same thing, who can help it ?

thing, imply a firm belief, or persuasion, that we shall receive them freely for Christ's sake.

But what puts the matter beyond debate, is, that our Lord, in the words formerly quoted, expresses this faith in prayer, by a believing, not simply that God is able to bestow what things soever we ask of him in prayer, but that we *shall receive them* *. As these words of our Lord are an evident confirmation of what we formerly observed, namely, that it is by believing the promise men *actually receive*, and *become possessed* of the blessings promised; it is plain, that they give the letter-writer occasion for displaying his critical talent in the same manner he has done it against what he calls the whirlpool of the popular doctrine, and the grand secret of manufacturing truth without evidence: for this contains neither more nor less than what is evidently implied in the passage above-quoted, and many others of a like import both in the Old and New Testament.

* *Mark xi. 24. οἱ πιστεῖν ὅτι λαβῶσιν, believe that ye receive them.* The words are very emphatical, importing not only the certainty of faith with respect to the future enjoyment of promised blessings, but also that by faith believers do receive, or enter upon a kind of begun possession, before the actual, sensible, and full fruition of them. The very moment they believe, they acquire, or obtain a special interest in them, whereby the actual and full possession thereof, in due time, is infallibly secured to them. Hence believers are said to *receive*, and *have*, here in this world, what the actual and full possession of is reserved for them in the other world. *Heb. xii. 28. We RECEIVING A KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE MOVED,* &c. *2 Cor. v. 1.—We HAVE A BUILDING OF GOD, AN HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS,* *ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS.* *John iii. 36. v. 24. vi. 47. &c.*

When

When *Palaemon* insinuates, that his opponents endeavour to keep the doctrine of election as far removed from the thoughts of their hearers as possible, till “they have prepared some ground for faith to rest upon,” or acquired “some reason why God in his choice should respect them more than others *,” it is such an impudent calumny, that, for his sake, I blush to repeat it. Does not he certainly know, that those worthy men still affirmed and taught, that the free, sovereign love, and mere good pleasure of God, were the sole cause of election; that whatever grace or gracious qualifications are to be found with any, they do flow from, or are the fruit of election, and consequently cannot be the cause of it, or any reason why God in his choice should respect them more than others. They were so far from teaching that sinners must, by some labour of their own, prepare a ground for their faith to rest upon, that, on the other hand, they constantly affirm, that a solid foundation for the faith of the most guilty sinner belonging to the lapsed race of *Adam*, is laid already in the free promise and testimony of God in the gospel; and that this is a foundation laid, not in the sinner’s own personal endeavours, or good qualifications of any kind, but in *ZION*; in the preaching and dispensation of the everlasting gospel, the law which is said to go forth of *Zion*, and the word of the Lord that was to be sent forth from *Jerusalem* †; a foundation on which all hearers of the gospel, without exception, have not only a sufficient warrant, but are expressly called and commanded to build their faith, and a firm and assured hope of salvation ‡.

* Letters, p. 348. † Isai. ii. 3. ‡ Isai. xxviii. 16. compared with Rom. ix. 33, and 1 John iii. 23.

That our author was sufficiently apprised of all this, we may learn from the hint which he himself gives of their sentiments, in the very place where he disfigures and misrepresents them in the manner afore-said. What for a conscience then must this man have, who imputes to those eminent preachers no less a crime than that of denying the God that is above, or downright *Atheism*, merely for what he himself must know to be manifestly false; namely, their teaching that some distinguishing qualifications which men come to be possessed of in time, must be viewed by them as the cause of their election from eternity, or, at least, as some reason why God in his choice should respect them more than others? The letter-writer we are sure has perused their discourses and writings, and we cannot imagine he is so dull as not to perceive, that such an error is directly contrary to the whole scope and strain of their doctrine. Here, then, the most extensive charity cannot vindicate him from the charge of asserting deliberately, and with great confidence, what he himself knows to be a palpable untruth. And if God himself declares concerning his people whom, in our times, we take to be the same with true believers and lovers of the apostolic gospel, that *they are children who will not lie**; we may be sure, that our author, and those who partake with him in his iniquity, and in like manner give their mouths to evil, and with their tongues frame deceit, are none of them. If after this any should question to whom they belong, and whose genuine children they are, we refer them to *John viii. 44.* for full satisfaction.

The ancient apostolic gospel teaches us to speak *evil of no man*†, namely, by bringing any unjust, or

* *Isa. Ixiii. 8.*

† *Tit. iii. 2.*

even

even rash accusation against him, or by exposing his infirmities invidiously or unnecessarily ; but it seems *Palemon's* gospel lays him under no such restriction, but allows him to speak evil of *any man*, the most innocent and the very best of men ; to lie stoutly, and utter his lies with as much confidence as if they were the most undoubted truths, provided he can only find a way to impose upon some weak, ignorant and unstable souls, by attempting to persuade them, that he is prompted to do all this by a disinterested zeal for the ancient gospel ; which is as great a lie as all the rest.

When this Gentleman tells us, "that the distinction made by the popular preachers betwixt the word, promise, call, or testimony, and the purpose of God is so idle and ill-placed, that we find the Scripture commonly intimating the divine purpose of making a distinction among mankind in the very bosom of that testimony which must be believed for justification *," either he is endeavouring only to puzzle and perplex us with one of his unmeaning reveries which no mortal can make any sense of, or his reasoning proceeds upon this false maxim, That justifying faith is only a general assent to any proposition contained in the Scriptures ; such as, *That Christ died and rose again* ; *That all who truly believe in Christ are justified* ; or, *That all the elect shall be saved* ; which is just the old *Popish* notion † that has been so often refuted

by

* Letters, p. 348.

† — Apparet, fidem justificantem babere pro objecto omnia que Deus revelavit : & fidem historicam, miraculorum, & justificantem, unam & eandem esse fidem ; that is, "It is evident, that all things which God has revealed in his word, are the object (i.e. equally, or in the same manner, the object) of justifying faith : " and

by Protestant divines. In opposition to this, we have already shewed from the apostolic writings, that it is the free promise of the remission of sins and eternal salvation through Jesus Christ *, made to sinners of mankind who hear the gospel indefinitely, that is the proper and immediate foundation of justifying faith : which promise never is, nor can be, truly believed without a particular application thereof to the sinner himself. It is this promise which those eminent preachers of the gospel whom our author discovers such a peculiar spite against, have an eye to when they distinguish betwixt the purpose and the promise, or testimony of God in the gospel : and it is evident, that this contains no intimation of *any* distinction among mankind, either made, or to be made, in consequence of election, but equally respects all the hearers of the gospel, and lays a sure foundation for the faith of pardon, and eternal salvation, through the righteousness and blood of the great Redeemer, to every sinner of

" and historical faith, the faith of miracles, and justifying faith, are one and the same faith" : that is, there is no essential or specific difference between them. *Bellarmino.*

* It may be observed, that besides the several promises of this kind expressly made and addressed to sinners in Scripture, all the declarations, calls, and invitations of grace directed to them, with every account given of the person, offices, righteousness and grace of Christ, or of the divine mercy venting through him towards guilty sinners, warranting them to trust in, and rely wholly upon him for justification and salvation, do virtually and necessarily imply such a promise. So far is it from being a truth, that there are no promises directed to sinners in the gospel, as *Palemon* and Mr. *Bellarmino* would make us believe, that it is really ALL PROMISE.

mankind

mankind who enjoys the benefit of divine revelation.

When this captious writer charges his antagonists with representing the Deity as keeping secret his gracious intentions as to particular persons, and yet, at the same time, revealing his gracious intentions to the same persons in his word and promise *, he, after his usual manner, invidiously misrepresents their sentiments, and endeavours to impose upon the weak and ignorant reader, by giving him a false view of the matter : for the preachers he speaks of never affirmed, that God reveals his gracious intentions to sinners in his word and promise any otherwise, than by intimating his gracious purpose to receive and bestow eternal salvation on every sinner that will come to him by Jesus Christ his well-beloved Son, and assuring them, by the most solemn calls and serious expostulations, that he is not trifling, but dealing with them in good earnest, when he invites them to come to him and makes a free offer or promise of the remission of sins, and eternal life through the great Mediator, to all who will believe and accept of the same. They also taught, that in the way of believing the promise they may come to be assured of their election, and of God's gracious intention actually to bestow eternal life and salvation upon them, for the sake of Jesus Christ. And this is really no more than, to assert that the gospel is true, or that *whoever believeth on the Son of God hath, or shall infallibly be brought to the possession of everlasting life.*

The senseless and invidious insinuation with regard to a passage quoted from a sermon, preached by Mr. Ralph Erskine, on 2 Cor. v. 18. and another from a sermon, preached by his brother Mr.

Ebenezer, on *Luke* ii. 28. with third taken from the writings of the judicious Mr. *Boston*, whereby he insults the memory, and shews a strong inclination to fix a blot on the character of these excellent men, I dismiss as unworthy of any notice. The most of our author's quotations from the sermons and writings of his opponents serve only to discover his own malevolent disposition, and the extreme folly of his impertinent and insipid remarks on them.

We shall now pass on to the consideration of another tenet advanced by this pretended friend of the ancient gospel in his *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*.

ARTICLE XI.

TH E R E are no MYSTERIES in the gospel, or in the Christian religion, that can justly, or with any propriety be so called, on any other account than because they were formerly veiled and concealed under some types, figures or parables; and this is the only reason why any divine truths are called MYSTERIES in the New Testament.

REMARKS.

THE author of the letters, in the beginning of his prolix and extraordinary dissertation on *mystery*, is pleased to tell us, " That since Christianity has been formed into a capital science under the name of *Theology*, as the sister of Philosophy, its teachers, despising the apostolic weapons, as too weak and contemptible to support their cause, and give it a creditable appearance, have borrowed all the arts of the schools to enable

" able them to step forth in a decent figure, on a
 " footing with their cousins the philosophers." And adds he, " Among other arts we may rank
 " this as one, that they have made much the like
 " use of the word *mystery*, as their kinsmen for a
 " long time made of *occult quality*. After they have
 " done their best to accommodate the Christian re-
 " ligion to the pride of men, whenever they come
 " to a strait they shelter themselves in the word
 " *mystery*. So that *the mysteries of our holy religion*,
 " or of revealed religion, has become fixed style,
 " and been used as a solemn phrase of sacred ob-
 " scurity, to hold at a distance all profane inqui-
 " rers *."

Here *Palæmon* scornfully censures all our systematic writers, yea all Christian teachers since the days of the apostles †, as having done what they

* Letters, p. 100.

† He means, no doubt, all besides his revered father Mr. J. G—s and himself, with a few others belonging to their fraternity. But the honour of reviving the ancient apostolic gospel must, without all question, principally belong to Mr. Glass, who not much above thirty years ago, thought fit to oblige the world with a new and very extraordinary scheme of divinity, much applauded by his blind and deluded votaries. This that Gentleman and our author, with overbearing confidence, would obtrude upon the weak and ignorant, under the plausible name of the *ancient apostolic gospel*: but in reality it is nothing else but a medley of old *Pelagian*, *Papist*, *Socinian*, and, would you believe it, *Neonomian* and *Antinomian* notions, revived in a new shape, and blended together with a little art, and the help of some laboured circumlocutions, and ambiguous phrases, that will admit of very different, and sometimes contrary significations, yea, of any meaning that the authors thereof are pleased, or imagine it will make for their purpose to put upon them.

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could to accommodate the Christian religion to the pride of men, and borrowed terms of art from the schools; that they might both make some decent and reputable appearance in the eyes of philosophers and their votaries, and the better conceal those artifices by which they have endeavoured to disguise and corrupt the true doctrine of the gospel taught by the apostles. So arrogant is this writer, that, not content with making observations on the external conduct and behaviour, which only fall within the sphere of human cognizance, he frequently, yea almost on every occasion, takes upon him to judge the very hearts of men, and determine what are the secret motives and springs of their actions, thus invading the throne of Omnipotence, and the incom-municable prerogative of him, *Who searcheth the hearts;* and trieth the reins of the children of men.

Because divines have sometimes collected the chief heads of the Christian religion into one short summary, and arranged them in such order as might afford the most natural and easy view of the whole system of divine truth, and that near connection which the several parts thereof have with one another; and because, when illustrating divine truths and refuting the contrary errors, they have now and then borrowed some terms from the schools, which, when rightly applied, must be allowed to be as innocent as any other, and the use of them, in some cases, both expedient and necessary; our author would have us believe, that all this has proceeded from a contempt of the Scriptures and of the simplicity of the apostolic style and method, and a vain affectation of imitating and putting themselves on the same respectable footing with philosophers. Though some ancient fathers of the church, who, by the too frequent use of some terms, and phrases borrowed from the Platonic schools,

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did sometimes unhappily disguise, and throw a mist upon some truths of the gospel, which might have been more clearly and safely expressed without them, were perhaps justly chargeable with something of this kind : though it must also be allowed, that the old *Popish* schoolmen were for several ages very culpable in this respect ; and that there have been other Christian teachers who have made an unnecessary and too frequent use of scholastic terms, which have rather had a tendency to perplex and throw a veil upon those doctrines of Christianity they were used to express and explain, than any way to illustrate them : is this a sufficient reason for bringing such an accusation against all systematic writers, and Christian teachers, in general ; or for exploding all terms of art that ever were used in the schools, when it is evident, that many of them have a clear and determinate signification, and are as fit to express what is denoted by them as any other ?

If *Palæmon* should affirm, that it is unwarrantable to express divine truths any otherwise than in the precise language and words of Scripture, or teach them in any other method, or order, than that in which they are set forth to us in the Sacred Writings, as some brain-sick men like himself have sometimes done, every page of his *letters* would be a sufficient confutation of the *reverie* : for I have seldom met with a performance, on religious subjects, the language of which differs more from the style of the Inspired Writings, than that of our author in his *letters on THERON, &c.* There we find very few of the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; and where we do meet with them they are so wrested, perverted and disjointed from other parts of the Sacred Volume with which they have a near and necessary connection, as to lose much of their native lustre and favour. Though the figure and found

sound of the words remain, our author is at no small pains to deprive us of the genuine sense and meaning of them.

But to return to our purpose, Why all this clamour against *systems*? What evil have they done? What more harm can there be in giving a short and easy view of the chief heads of the Christian religion, and of the strict and beautiful connection that one revealed truth has with another, and adducing clear proofs from Scripture for confirming each of them, than there is in teaching the same truths by laboured and prolix dissertations; which are far from being so helpful to the memory, and often tend to mislead, and give a wrong bias to the judgment, by keeping the mind too long intent on one particular head of doctrine, whence it is often diverted from the consideration of another equally necessary to be known, and kept from having a just view of the connection betwixt one truth and another, by not attending to which men frequently slide into the shameful inconsistency of setting one part of revealed truth in opposition to another; many instances whereof we find in the letters on THERON and ASPASIO*.

But however this method of teaching and writing, in loose, disjointed harangues, and vague discourses, wherein there are often tedious digressions from the main point, and a strange mixture of things

* — “ There is—much confusion and inconsistency in the notions and opinions of some persons, because they devote their hours of study entirely to short *essays* and pamphlets, and cast contempt upon *systems* under a pretence of greater politeness; whereas the true reason of this contempt of systematical learning is mere laziness and want of judgment. Watts's Improvement of the mind, p. 318.

extremely

extremely foreign to the subject chiefly under consideration, must be in many cases less proper, instructive and profitable, than the systematic method formerly described; it is doubtless much better calculated for propagating error and false doctrine; as it affords the teachers thereof an opportunity for using various artifices, for concealing, colouring over, and insinuating with advantage and success, notions and opinions, the falsity, folly, and absurdity whereof would appear at first view, were they set forth in a plain simple dress, or put into the form of systematic treatises. We need not then be surprised to find those who make it their business to obscure and pervert the truths of the gospel, and instil their own wild notions and heretical opinions into the minds of men, dunning us perpetually with their impertinent clamours against *systems* of divinity, *confessions of faith, creeds, catechisms*, and all such plain methods of teaching: for these are considerable, and sometimes invincible obstructions in their way, when endeavouring to disseminate their own corrupt principles, under the specious pretext of zeal for the truth.

We shall now consider what *Palamon* has to offer for supporting his accusations against the popular preachers with regard to their use of the word *mystery*. This he would have us believe may be reckoned among the other arts, borrowed from the schools, which they cunningly make use of to support their cause, and give it a creditable appearance, or at least to keep themselves in countenance by veiling their deceit, while endeavouring to pervert and corrupt the apostolic gospel: for, says he, " Whenever they come to a strait;" that is, we may suppose, when they find it difficult to speak any further on the subject they are treating of in plain language, without exposing the absurdity of their doc-

doctrine, “ they shelter themselves in the word ‘‘ *mystery*, using it as a term of sacred obscurity to ‘‘ hold at a distance all profane inquirers *.” If his meaning is, that by the use of the word *mystery* they have endeavoured to conceal their own particular sentiments, or to veil those truths of the gospel which cannot so easily, if at all, be accommodated to the pride of men, as their other doctrines are ; he must doubtless have been sensible, that the charge is false : for he cannot but know, that the word *mystery* is very frequently, yea mostly used by them when treating of those doctrines about which he does not pretend to have any difference with them.

The essential oneness of the three Persons in the Godhead, the personal union between the divine and human natures in Christ, with the near union that takes place between him and all true believers, are what Christian teachers have most usually designed *mysteries* ; and we suppose the letter-writer professes to believe all these as well as his antagonists. What reason then has he to hedge, that they take shelter in the word *mystery* when they come to a strait, as if they were afraid to declare plainly what they express by that term, or never used it but with a design to amuse or deceive ?

This Gentleman must certainly know, that his antagonists teach and inculcate, all those truths which, after the example of the apostles, they design *mysteries*, in the most plain and familiar language, and with the most unreserved freedom. They only use the word *mystery* to check that pride, presumption, and vain curiosity, which too readily prompt men irreverently to pry into those things which far transcend the most elevated conceptions

of any finite mind, and are therefore called *the deep things of God**. And can they be justly blamed for this? Does not the Scripture expressly forbid all such bold, presumptuous and irreverent prying into the secrets of the Almighty, whose judgments are *a great depth, unsearchable; and his ways past finding out?* †

Though it should be granted, that what our author affirms concerning the proper signification, and scriptural use of the word *mystery*, is true; the whole amount of what he could, with any colour or shew of reason, charge his opponents with in relation to this matter, would be, that they have sometimes used this word in an improper sense, or used it in a sense somewhat different from the most natural and primary signification of it. And as it must argue a very captious and perverse humour to wrangle with any antagonist about a matter of so little consequence, it is intolerable for such a novice as the letter-writer, to condemn almost all Christian teachers since the days of the apostles for the use of a term which all must acknowledge to be in itself perfectly innocent, and which has been used by them in a very sound sense. Must the authority of this trifling, dreaming writer be accounted sufficient to change the common use of language? which every intelligent person knows is not in the power of any man to do; since, *Verba valent usum.*

Quem penes arbitrium est, & jus & norma loquendi.

If custom and common use have affixed a sound meaning to any term, however different from its primary signification it may be, there cannot be any harm in using it in that sense.

Further, though it should be granted, that *μυστηριον*, in the Greek, did primarily signify something

* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

† Rom. xi. 33.

that

that lies hid under some figure, emblem or parable, which being once explained it ceases to be a mystery: yea further, though we should allow, that the word in the New Testament is constantly used in this sense, it will not follow, that it is not lawful to use it in any other sense. Nor can it be said to be either unwarrantable or improper to use it for expressing a truth which, however clearly revealed in Scripture, is of so sublime a nature as far to transcend the most elevated conceptions of the human mind, especially in this mortal state, when general use has affixed such a meaning to it.

Besides, it may be observed, that this is a sense which differs very little from the primary signification of the word *mystery*, according to the letter-writer himself. He tells us, that the plain and simple gospel which *Paul* preached is often called *a mystery*, as being the true scope and sense of many ancient types and figures. Now it cannot be said, that the gospel, or the true scope and sense of those ancient types and figures, was wholly hid from the church under the Old Testament; it being the great design of them to exhibit what was signified thereby to the faith of the church and particular believers under that dispensation, though it was in a great measure concealed under them. The spiritual truths which were represented and exhibited in and under those types and figures, were therefore called *mysteries*, because, though partly revealed, they still in a great measure lay hid from the view of the church under the Old Testament economy. And why may not the truths of the gospel revealed in the New Testament, for a like reason, still be called *mysteries*? Since, though they are far more clearly revealed to us now under the Christian economy than they were to believers before the coming of Christ, the best sain's on earth have still but a very dark

dark and imperfect view of them? I hope it will be allowed, that the discoveries thereof made to the church triumphant or the glorified saints in heaven, will, at least, as far exceed the revelation that is now made of them to us, as this does excel those obscure and imperfect notices of them that believers under the legal dispensation were privileged with.

But we can by no means allow, that the word *mystery* is never used in Scripture in any other sense but that mentioned by *Palamon*. This he has not been able to make appear, though he frequently affirms it with great confidence, and it would discover too great weakness to admit his assertions without proof. That the word is sometimes used in the New Testament in the sense he speaks of, is not denied; but that it is always used in that sense, he has not been able to prove, nor indeed has he offered the least shadow of proof to support his assertion. Some of the passages he quotes from the apostolic writings to confirm his notion *, are so far from proving it, that the quite contrary may be inferred from them.

How far the observation made by the letter-writer may be allowed to be just, when he affirms, That the great and ultimate design of the *Schechinah*, or that visible cloud of glory which rested on the mercy-seat in the tabernacle and temple of old, was to typify and prefigure the incarnation of the Son of God, we shall not now inquire; though some may think it was rather typical of those illustrious and amazing displays that are made of the divine glory, or of the glory of God, of all his infinite perfections, especially his grace and mercy, in the face of *Jesus*; of reconciliation with God, and that comfortable access to him, and gracious com-

* Letters, p. 102.

union with him, in and through the person of the Mediator, which are the privilege of guilty sinners who get a view of him by faith as dwelling in his holy temple; Christ the *antitypical* temple in which he rests, resides and manifests his glory, as he did, in an inferior and typical sense, in the temple of *Jerusalem*. But though it should be granted, that "God made manifest in the flesh, " is the truth, spirit, or ultimate meaning of the "Shechinah, and of all the occasional appearances " of God to men," under the Old Testament, it does not appear, that the apostle calls the incarnation of the Son of God, or his manifestation in the flesh, the great *mystery* of godliness, only with relation to these; or that he had at all an eye to them when he thus designed it.

Again, though it should be allowed, that the Shechinah, and other appearances of God under the Old Testament, were typical of the incarnation of Christ, it is not easy to conceive how the other particulars mentioned by the apostle as belonging to the mystery of godliness, and parts of it, such as, his *being justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory,* could be typified by these. One thing is certain, namely, that the apostle designs what he speaks of a *mystery* even after it was revealed, without making mention of any type, emblem or parable, under which it was concealed before. And why may not ministers of the gospel be allowed to do so too, after his example? Palæmon's note at the bottom of p. 100. seems to tax the apostle with speaking improperly on this and other occasions, as well as the popular preachers when they apply the word *mystery* to the gospel or any spiritual truth.

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The question which he tells us is sometimes put by free-thinkers, namely, ‘What do we mean by “revealed mysteries?”’ is what needs not give any lover of the truth the least uneasiness; as it is only an impertinent cavil, founded wholly on this idle and false supposition, That nothing can in any sense, or degree, be said to be revealed or made known, which human reason is not able fully to comprehend, or solve all difficulties that may be moved concerning it. When these Gentlemen are able to favour us with a plain solution of all the difficulties that may be started concerning the plainest truths that are knowable by the light of nature, the certainty of which we suppose they no more question than we do the certainty of those mysteries which the gospel reveals, it will be time enough to answer their puzzling question, “What “do we mean by revealed mysteries?”

It would be easy to adduce a great many passages from the epistles of *Paul*, in which he applies the word *mystery* to the truths of the gospel, without giving the least hint from which we may infer, that he uses it in the sense contended for by the letter-writer, as the *only* proper signification of that term *. Yet after all *Palemon* will have it, “that in *Paul’s* epistles *mystery* always refers to some ancient figure.” That it sometimes does so, is not disputed; and this is all that the passages quoted by him can prove. He affirms with great confidence, that nothing any where in the New Testament is called a *mystery* but with respect to some figure, emblem, or parable, which was like a veil thrown over it before. Now, as was formerly observed, though it should be granted, that the word *mystery*

* I Cor. iv. 1. xiv. 2. Ephes. vi. 19. Col. ii. 2.
1 Tim. iii. 9. 16, &c.

when used in its primary and most proper sense does always signify something that was formerly veiled, or lay hid under some type, figure, or emblem, but is now made manifest, it would never follow, that it cannot be warrantably used in any other sense.

After all, we can see no reason why we should make this concession, since all who have any tolerable acquaintance with the Greek language know very well, that the word *μυστήριον* does primarily and properly signify *rem clausam, arcanam, seu velatam*, something that does not ly open to common view, but is hid or concealed, not wholly, but in some certain respects; so that men can have only dark and imperfect views of the same, whatever may be the cause of the imperfection, and obscurity of these conceptions which they have of it; whether they arise from some obscurity in the manner of revealing it, or from the nature of the thing itself.

When therefore the things of the Spirit of God, called by the apostle *the deep things of God**, are styled mysteries, because in their own nature they so far transcend the sphere of human reason, that it could never have discovered them, had not God been pleased to reveal them; and even when clearly revealed cannot of itself truly apprehend, much less fully comprehend them; as also because those to whom they are made known by divine and supernatural illumination, have still but very dark and imperfect views of them; they are so called in the most proper sense. And that for these and the like reasons they are frequently, yea most ordinarily, so designed in the New Testament, we doubt not to affirm, notwithstanding Palæmon's confident assertions to the contrary.

* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

We readily grant, that the *Greek* father's frequently used the word *μυστήριον*, *mystery*, in the sense our author speaks of, and the *Latin*s the word *sacramentum* in much the same sense; but that neither the former nor the latter ever used the word *mystery* in any other sense, he has not been able to make appear. Much less can it be proved, that every they objected to that use of the word, which, with a degree of assurance rarely to be met with, he censures in the sermons and writings of his antagonists. And we may venture to affirm, that there was never a Christian teacher of any character, since the days of the apostles, who denied the truth implied in that signification of the word *mystery*, which he so scornfully inveighs against; namely, That there are many things revealed in the gospel which can never be fully understood, or comprehended, by men in this mortal state. His observation, therefore, concerning the *Greek* and *Latin* fathers*, is altogether trifling and impertinent.

Palamon seems to insinuate, that there is no truth or doctrine of the gospel, or, to speak in his own dialect, no part of the Christian scheme that men, even in this life and also without any internal and supernatural illumination, may not have a clear, full, and comprehensive view of. For he is pleased to say, "That nothing can be more foolish and absurd than to join the epithets of *incomprehensible*, *obscure*, or *unintelligible*, to a *mystery* after it is declared."† And elsewhere he tells us, "That there is as plain, uniform, and regular a connection, in all the parts of the Christian scheme, as in any branch of the course of nature;" and, "that, in general, it is incumbered with much fewer,

* Letters, p. 102. † Letters, p. 102.

" and far less important difficulties, than are daily found in tracing the course of nature *."

That there is an uniform and regular connection in all the parts of the Christian scheme cannot be questioned, since it is the product, and, if we may speak so, the most consummate effect of infinite wisdom. That some great, and even insolvable difficulties, may be moved with regard to many things; yea almost every thing that takes place in the ordinary course of nature, is also readily granted. But if his meaning is, that spiritual things, the *deep things of God*, revealed in the gospel, may by human reason, aided by external revelation only, be as readily, clearly, and fully understood, as natural things, which properly fall within the compass, and under the cognizance of human reason, he manifestly contradicts the Scriptures. For the apostle tells us, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*—and that he *cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned* †; plainly intimating, that men in an unrenewed state, let the gospel be ever so clearly preached to them, are so far from being able fully to comprehend the things of the Spirit of God, or, to speak in a more philosophic style than ever Paul used, “*the several parts of the Christian scheme*,” that they cannot so much as *perceive*, or have any just conceptions of them at all.

When the letter-writer insinuates, that the words *incomprehensible, mysterious, and unintelligible*, are synonymous terms, or terms of the same import ‡, he either betrays his gross ignorance of common language; or, which is more probable, endeavours thus to throw the greater odium upon his antagonists, and to make their use of the word *mystery* appear

* Letters, p. 103. † 1 Cor. ii. 14. ‡ Letters, p. 102.
the

the more ridiculous. For by this artifice he would make the unwary and injudicious reader believe, that what they call a mystery is something so intricate and obscure as to be wholly unintelligible; and that “they call it *mystical* only to avoid saying “*unintelligible**.” But does not this Gentleman certainly know, that the insinuation is entirely groundless; and that those things in the gospel and religion to which his opponents, agreeably to the apostolic style, give the name of *mysteries*, are such things as are both clearly revealed, and firmly believed by all true Christians on the testimony of God himself speaking in his own word; yet fitly so called for the reasons formerly mentioned, and to check that petulant, presumptuous humour, which too often prompts men to disbelieve and reject those truths of the gospel which their own weak reason is not able to comprehend, or answer all objections, and solve all difficulties that may be moved concerning them.

Our author himself informs us, that what his opponents call *mystery*, is “something we cannot comprehend, or account for†.” This, if explained in a sense agreeable to the known principles of those worthy preachers whom he is using his utmost endeavours to reproach, may be allowed to be a pretty just description of what they call *mystery*. For what they usually design so, is really something which, however clearly revealed in the gospel and firmly believed, is what men, especially in this im-bodied state, can never comprehend, or so fully understand, as to be able to answer all objections, and give a clear and satisfying solution of all difficulties that may be started concerning it. But the words having some ambiguity in them, which *Paleum*

* Letters, p. 70.

† P. 26.

endeavours to take the advantage of; for ambiguity and equivocation are the principal supports of his cause; may admit of a very different signification, and be understood as denoting something so abstruse, or absurd, as to be altogether unintelligible. This is the sense he would have us affix to the word *mystery* when used by his antagonists; though it is well known, that they use it in no other sense than the apostles did before them. Their sense of that term is clearly expressed by the apostle *Paul* when he calls the truths and doctrines of the gospel *the deep things of God*, and the blessings of the gospel *the unsearchable riches of Christ**.

But after all, methinks, the letter-writer had very little reason to grudge his opponents the use of the word *mystery* in any sense; for there are some things advanced by himself, yea, which appear to be leading articles of his creed, that must be allowed to be *mysteries in the worst sense*, that is, *altogether unintelligible and absurd*: as when he tells us, "That God is the spirit and ultimate scope of his own abode in the temple of Jerusalem; that a glorified man is the highest object of worship that ever was or will be presented to the thoughts of angels or men;—That conviction of sin, or a sense of guilt and misery, is, 'no way necessary to the exercise of justifying faith; and yet plainly infinates,' that no man will believe the saving truth, so as to enjoy the benefit and comfort of it, till he has been thoroughly pinched with the impossibility of hope on every other side; That the faith of a Christian is the blood of Christ; That the essence of faith is the eternal God; and gives plain hints, imposing, 'That a man may have justifying faith and yet not be justified; That

* Ephes. iii. 8.
anomalous

saving

saving faith is a *persuasion* of the truth of gospel, and yet no act of the mind, &c.*

All these, and many other things of a like nature, our author affirms either directly or indirectly. And I think it can scarce be denied but some of these assertions are so *mystical* as to be wholly *unintelligible*; while others of them are palpable contradictions. Such are *Palæmon's mysteries!* The popular preachers in their sermons and writings advance no such mysteries. What they call *mysteries* are truths both certain and of the highest importance; so denominated, because they cannot be perfectly or fully comprehended by men, by the most intelligent Christians in this world, where at best they see but *as through a glass darkly* †; and many of them are of such a nature as must forever transcend the conceptions of every finite mind. And will *Palæmon* take upon him to affirm, that there are no such truths revealed in the gospel, or that it proposes nothing to be believed by men that finite minds are not able fully to comprehend? If he should do so he would evidently give the lie to our blessed Lord and his apostles. Does not our Lord when speaking of the work of the Holy Ghost in regeneration, represent it as an *incomprehensible mystery* ‡? Does not the apostle Paul term the things of the Spirit of God the *deep things of God*, and expressly affirm, that they are such as *no man knoweth*, namely, without the internal, supernatural teaching of the Holy Spirit §? Does not the same apostle plainly assert, that the judgments and ways of God, especially those which respect the redemption and salvation of lost sinners,

* See letters on Theron, &c. p. 118, 119—290, 291, 292, 293, 342, 330, 288, 301, 302, 303, 324, 304, 483.
† 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † John. iii. 8. § 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12.

56 PALÆMON's CREED Art. XI.

are unsearchable, and past finding out? * Does he not also declare in express terms, that he *who thinketh he knoweth any thing*, hath a full and perfect knowledge of any one truth revealed in the gospel, *knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know*, or is altogether destitute of any true and saving knowledge of the gospel, and of every truth revealed therein. †

In fine, is it not abundantly evident, that the gospel, and the things of God revealed therein, are frequently, yea ordinarily and chiefly called *mysteries*, because they so far transcend the capacity of every finite mind, that it is impossible for any man, at least in this mortal state, to attain to a perfect, full, or comprehensive knowledge of them ||? When the letter-writer, therefore, dignifies his new scheme of principles with the title of the apostolic gospel, one would think he must design it thus by a *figure*, as *that is the very reverse of this*; more opposite to the true apostolic doctrine than perhaps any system of principles adopted by any professing christianity ever was. But if the Gentleman will add chimerical pretensions of uncommon veneration for the apostolic gospel, which yet he uses his utmost efforts to overthrow, or at least to pervert and corrupt, to his other dotages, he must even be allowed to amuse and please himself with the *reveries* of his own distempered imagination.

Mean time we shall proceed to consider what this author has next to offer, as part of his new creed.

* Rom. ii. 33. † Cor. viii. 2.

|| Υπερ την, την πατερινην, διδε κοινωνικην ελευθεριαν, φαντασιαν, Expos. Fid. an ancient treatise which is generally supposed to have been writ by Justin Martyr, who lived about, or rather a little before the middle of the second century.

ARTICLE XII.

JUSTIFYING faith is nothing else but the simple belief of the bare truth, THAT JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN, or, that HE GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR MANY, without including any persuasion, that the sinner himself is warranted to rest his hope of pardon, acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, upon the righteousness and death of Christ; or that ever he shall have any benefit thereby.

REMARKS.

THIS notion with respect to justifying faith, is not only affirmed, but frequently repeated, and inculcated, with great confidence, in the letters on *Theron* and *Apses*. But as it is wholly inconsistent with the account given in Scripture of the nature, properties, and effects of justifying and saving faith; it is easy to see, that it is no way tenable according to the principles of the letter-writer himself, if it can be said he has any. This we hope to make appear, after we have first briefly shewed, that his notion of justifying faith is entirely repugnant to the scriptural account of it.

We shall not here insist on the several acceptations of the word *faith*, which in Scripture is used in various, and very different senses, according to the nature of the subject treated of. It may suffice to observe, that sometimes faith is put for the doctrine of faith, or the truths believed, and sometimes for a belief and persuasion of the truth, or

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that act of the mind whereby it gives a firm assent to revealed truth, founded on the divine testimony, or the record of God speaking in his word. We now speak of what may be, and is usually called a *divine* faith: for such a belief of the facts recorded in the New Testament as is wholly founded on moral-evidence, arising from the character of those human witnesses who have attested them, and other circumstances of credibility attending the same, though it may be called faith, is not *divine*, but a *human* faith. Yet it may be proper to observe, that, as this includes a firm persuasion of the truth of the several facts relating to the death and resurrection of Jesus recorded in the New Testament, according to the letter-writer's hypothesis, it must be taken for justifying faith, as well as the former; for he makes no distinction, but will have the belief or persuasion of the *simple truth*, however acquired, or whatever it may be supposed to be chiefly founded upon, to be all that is meant by justifying and saving faith.

This author, who is ever disagreeing with himself, or with almost every body else, would indeed sometimes make us believe, that wherever we meet with the word *faith* in the New Testament, it ought to be taken in the sense first mentioned; namely, for the *truth* of the gospel, or the *divine* of faith, and never for such a faith, or persuasion of the truth as is inherent in the mind itself. I suppose it was with a design to prove this, that he made the collections of Scripture texts we meet with, p. 150, 302, of his letters. In several, if not most of these, it is granted, that faith may be taken for the *truth*, or *doctrine* of the gospel: but no texts of Scripture adduced by him will prove, that the words *faith*, and *truth* are always convertible terms;

Or that wherever they occur in the New Testament they have the same signification. All that they prove is what I suppose no body ever denied, namely, that in several places of Scripture faith is put for the doctrine of the gospel, or the truth to be believed in order to salvation. He indeed affirms, plainly enough, that wherever the word *faith* is to be met with in the New Testament it still carries the same meaning*, but he has not been able to advance any thing, that has the least shadow of proof, in support of this extraordinary assertion. Yea, the falsity of it may very easily be evinced : for though it must be allowed, and I do not know that ever it was denied, that faith in Scripture is frequently put for the truth believed, or the doctrine of the gospel ; yet when it is opposed to doubting, or dissidence ; when it is said to be deficient, or to grow ; when it is called *the gift of God*, *the faith of God's elect*, and *a faith of the operation of God*, doubtless in the hearts of his people, and hence said to be wrought *in believers with power* ; as also when the epithets of *little* and *great*, *weak* and *strong*, are joined to it †, it must certainly be understood of the *grade*, and not the *doctrine* of faith : for this is liable to no decay, weakness, or mutation, but still remains invariably the same, whether it is believed or not.

How an internal persuasion of the truth, and confidence or hope in God arising therefrom, may be said to be great or small, strong or weak, to grow or decay, is easily understood ; but how the testimony of God, or the doctrine of the gospel,

* Letters, p. 302. † 2 Thes. i. 11. Matt. xxii. 31. Jam. i. 6. 1 Thes. iii. 10. Luke xvii. 5. 2 Thes. i. 3. Ephes. iii. 8. Tit. ii. 1. Colos. ii. 12. Matt. xxviii. 20. viii. 10. xv. 28. Rom. xiv. 1. iv. 20, &c.

can with any tolerable propriety be said to be great or small, strong or weak, is a mystery that would require the genius of a *Palæmon* to explain. This is indeed like some other of his *mysteries*, altogether unintelligible, at least, to any but those who by a peculiar cast of the understanding are distinguished from the rest of mankind. The apostle tells us, that the elders of old, who obtained a good report through faith, were persuaded of the promises, and embraced them; and their being thus persuaded of the promises, and embracing them, he calls *faith*: for, says he, *These all died in faith**; that is, being firmly persuaded of the truth of the promises, and having a firm and certain expectation of their accomplishment in due time: but methinks it would sound very harsh, if according to *Palæmon's* notion, we should say they died in the *truth* of the promises; though this was certainly the thing believed by them †.

When

* *Heb. xi. 13.*

† The apostle, *Heb. iv. 2.* tells us, That the word did not profit those to whom the gospel was preached, not being mixed with *FAITH* in them that heard it. Now, if what *Palæmon* would have us believe should hold true, namely, that *faith* does never signify any internal act of the mind, or grace of the Spirit implanted in the souls of believers, with the exercise thereof, but always the truth believed, or the doctrine of the gospel; it will be very hard to make any tolerable sense of these words of the apostle. For if the word and *faith* still denote one and the same thing, or carry the same meaning, as our author, p. 302, confidently affirms they do; when it is said, The word preached did not profit — — not being mixed with *faith* in them that heard it, the sense must be, The truth revealed or preached did not profit them that heard it, not being mixed with *truth*, or with itself. Such a gloss may pass with *Palæmon*, to whom the most

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When the letter-writer insinuates, that faith in the New Testament is always put for the truth believed, or the doctrine of the gospel; and that by this faith men are justified; it can scarce be thought he means, that sinners are justified by the truth of the gospel abstractly considered, whether they believe it or not. This, I am ready to think, he would blush to assert in express terms: his meaning, if it can be said his words have any meaning, must therefore be, that it is by the truth of the gospel known and believed, or assented to in a proper manner, that a sinner is justified; and that it is the gospel thus received into the heart, or, if this looks too like *heart-work*, which our author cannot endure to hear of, into the mind and conscience, which produces all those effects which the popular preachers, or rather the whole body of Protestant divines, have usually ascribed to faith, considered as an act of the mind, or a grace implanted in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, in his fifth letter he speaks in the following manner: " When once a man believes a testimony, he becomes possessed of a truth; and that truth may be said to be *his* *faith*. Yea, we have no idea of truth, but with reference to its being believed". The question

shocking absurdities, and the wildest reveries, are become so familiar, that he can assert them with as much confidence as if they were the most undoubted truths; but, I believe, to every body else it would be quite unintelligible. It may be doubted if ever there was a writer that used such an indecent and intolerable freedom in explaining, I should rather say, in wresting and perverting the Scripture.

* How far this is consistent with what our author asserts, p. 14. where he tells us, " that the gospel professes nothing to be believed by us, but what is infallibly

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" about faith must be set aside, when the inquiry
 " turns upon, how a man is affected by a testimony
 " which he believes! His passions and affections
 " are set in motion, according to the nature
 " of the thing testified, or according as the testi-
 " mony brings him matter of joy or grief, hope
 " or fear. †"

From this passage it appears, that, in the opinion of our author himself, an *internal persuasion* of the truth of the gospel, even such a persuasion as is still accompanied with those holy affections, and gracious effects that are ascribed to saving faith in Scripture, is necessary to justification; so that, without it none can be interested in the privileges, or enjoy the blessings of the gospel. And if it is necessary to justification, why may not it be called the *mean, or instrument* of justification? And if this persuasion cannot be produced, or take place, in the heart or mind of any sinner, but by the gracious operation of the divine Spirit, as the Scripture every where affirms; if it is the gift of God, and, in the nature of the thing, the *act* of an enlightened and renewed mind, why may not the Spring and principle of it be termed *grace wrought* in the heart by the Holy Spirit? It must certainly be so; unless we can suppose, that a man may act before he has any power to act; that he may see and yet be blind; perform vital actions and yet be
 " truly *true*, whether we believe it or not;" we leave the reader to judge. Yet, because we may have some idea of truth believed and rejected, and of truth believed and received. If Mr. John Palmer was certainly *false* in affirming any thing of that which he neither had, nor could have any idea of. But it seems this Gentleman, like some he speaks of, p. 189. has learned to talk, even after he has got beyond the scope of thinking altogether.

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† Letter, p. 301.

dead;

dead ; or else that all men have naturally a power to believe the gospel, so as to be justified and saved thereby, or by what it reveals, independent of any gracious operation of the divine Spirit. To maintain the latter would be downright *Pelagianism* ; and if *Palæmon* should assert the former, it would be needless to reason with him ; as that would be in effect to affirm, that a thing may be which cannot possibly be. Such an assertion as this must of necessity put a period to all debate ; because it does at once sap the very foundations of all human knowledge.

If *Palæmon* should yield, that such a persuasion of the truth as was formerly described, is necessary to justification ; that it is wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God ; and that it is the immediate principle of all gracious habits and holy affections, and of all that holiness and obedience to the divine law that have been ordinarily said to accompany, or flow from saving faith ; he would no more have any reason to quarrel with the popular preachers for their sentiments with regard to this subject. For as it cannot be denied, that the persuasion just now mentioned, may, according to the usual acceptation of the word, and with the greatest propriety, be styled *faith*, and is frequently so called in Scripture ; it must also be allowed to be some way the *mean*, or *instrument* of justification ; a mean of interesting one in all the blessings and privileges of the gospel : and, further, it must have all those properties and gracious effects which are any where in Scripture, or in the writings of fluorescent divines agreeable thereto, attributed to justifying and saving faith.

If it should still be urged, that it is not by any internal persuasion of the truth, but by the truth believed, that men are justified, sanctified and saved, it would only discover a wrangling and contentious

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spirit, and an inclination to strive unprofitably about words ; which is quite contrary to the spirit of the apostolic gospel, that expressly condemns all vain janglings and babblings of this kind *. Whether it be said, that it is by the truth believed and received into the mind and heart, or by an internal, and suitable knowledge and belief of the truth, which is received into, and operates upon the heart only by means of that knowledge and belief, that men are justified, &c. it comes all to one ; there being no difference at all between the one and the other of these assertions, but what lies in the mode of expression.

The celebrated preachers whom *Palæmon* takes so much pleasure in opposing, and shews such a strong inclination to defame, never maintained, that faith abstractly considered, has any intrinsic merit, excellency, or efficacy, for the justification of a sinner : but, as they were very ready to acknowledge, that in regard to its very being, and whole efficacy, it depends on its object, or the truth of the gospel believed ; so, when they affirmed, that faith is the *mean*, or *instrument* of justification, and that whereby one is interested in all the blessings of the gospel, they meant no more than this, that it is only in, and by the *perfusion* formerly mentioned, which has been usually, and very properly too, called *faith*, that the saving truth is received into the mind, the conscience, and the heart ; operates upon the soul, and exerts all the efficacy ascribed to it in the regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification, and salvation of a sinner. And therefore they never supposed to call the new creature, or inherent grace, the *word implanted*.

* Tit. iii. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 16.

† When accompanied by the power and energy of the divine Spirit, without which it can have no due or saving effect upon the mind and heart.

*ed in the heart ; which abides and operates there in the exercise of all holy affections, and excites to all holy obedience in the practice and conversation : whence it is called, The truth which dwelleth in believers ; the word of Christ dwelling in them ; and by the apostle James, the ingrafted word *.* For the same reason Christ is said to be formed, and to dwell in the hearts of believers by faith †.

Thus, whether a suitable belief and persuasion of the truth of the gospel, or the truth itself, which thereby only is made effectual for the conversion and sanctification of the sinner, be termed the principle of holy affections, and gracious actions, is not material : for in whichever of these ways we should chuse to express ourselves, it will still hold true, that such a persuasion of the saving truth as has all the properties, and is productive of all the gracious effects usually ascribed to justifying faith, and which, doubtless, may with great propriety, and in the Sacred Writings is often so called, is absolutely necessary to justification and sanctification. And it is equally certain, that this is what never can take place, but in consequence of an internal and supernatural work of the divine Spirit, upon the mind and heart ; who is, therefore, in Scripture called the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of grace, and the Spirit of holiness ; and is expressly said to work in believers, *both to will and to do of his good pleasure ; yea to fulfill in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the WORK OF FAITH with power* ‡.

From what has been observed it is easy to account for that variety of expression we meet with in the Scriptures in relation to this point. Regeneration, sanctification, and salvation, or the whole of that

* See 2 John 2. Col. iii. 16. Jam. i. 21. &c.

† Gal. iv. 19. Ephes. iii. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 13. Zech. xii. 10. Rom. i. 4. Philip. ii. 13. 2 Thes. i. 11. good

good work which is begun, and carried on in the hearts of believers, is ascribed sometimes to the Holy Spirit, sometimes to the gospel, or the word of truth, and sometimes to faith *. It is attributed to the Spirit, as the *author* and *efficient cause*; to the word as the great *external mean*, and to *faith* as the great *internal mean*, whereby, through the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost †, believers obtain an interest in, and are actually made partakers of all the privileges and blessings of the gospel. And this, by the way, may serve to confute the strange notion advanced by Polamon in the following words;

" There is no separating the agency of the Holy
Spirit from the knowledge of the truth ‡."

These words, if they have any meaning, must certainly import, that the whole efficacy of the truth for producing those gracious effects which in Scripture are ascribed to it, depends upon something that is inherent in itself, and inseparable from it; yet nothing is more evident, or more clearly taught in the Inspired Writings, than that the word of the gospel derives all its virtue and efficacy from the spiritual agency, and gracious operation of the Holy Spirit; concerning this we wish ||; not always, or necessarily, but according to his own will and sovereign good pleasure. If there is no separating the agency of the Holy Spirit from the word, then every hearer of the gospel must instantly commence a true believer; which I suppose the letter-writer himself will scarce venture to affirm.

If by the knowledge of the truth, from which our author tells us the agency of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated, he means only such a knowledge

* Cor. vi. 11. 2 Cor. iii. 3. Tit. iii. 5. 1 Thes. ii. 13.
John xvii. 17. Acts xv. 9. xxvi. 18. † 1 Thes. ii. 13.
1 Peter. i. 22. ‡ Letters, p. 361. || Rom. i. 16. John
xvi. 8. 2 Cor. x. 4. Eph. ex. 2, 3. 1 Cor. 10. 1 ix. 10. 1
bees

of it as is produced and maintained by the special operation of the Holy Ghost concurring with the word, he does no more than affirm what, I presume, no body will deny; namely, That there is no separating the agency of the Holy Spirit from his agency; or that when he works powerfully in, and by the word of the gospel, he really does so. But, methinks, few will be made wiser by this kind of reasoning, or a multitude of such assertions. Weak readers may be apt to think, that some very important and mysterious truth is implied therein; or that some rare discovery is made by such ways of speaking as these. And when they find *Palemon* exclaiming, with peculiar vehemence, against the popular preachers for being so presumptuous as, upon any account whatever, to call the living and powerful word of God a *dead letter* *, they will no doubt impute it to an uncommon veneration for the Scriptures. But when the matter is examined to the bottom, it will be found, either that his words have no meaning at all, or that he is only attempting to revive some old *Pelagian* notions, which were long since exploded by the Christian church, and have ever been held in the utmost detestation by all the genuine lovers of truth.

We have already observed, that, according to our author himself, the *knowledge* and *persuasion* of the truth is so necessary to justification and sanctification, that neither can be without it: Thus far, then, he and the popular preachers are agreed; for they never affirmed that faith is the *ground*, or any way *meritorious* of justification, but only that it is the *man*, or *instrument* of it; so that, without it no sinner can be justified, or enjoy the benefit of the imputed righteousness. And this he cannot refuse,

* Letters, p. 34, 35.

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according to his own principles: for he tells us, "That when once a man believes a testimony, he becomes possessed of a truth; and that truth may be said to be *bis faith* *." If when a man believes a testimony, he becomes possessed of a truth — it cannot be said he was possessed of it, or could reap any benefit from it before. And till the truth of the gospel becomes a man's *faith*, our author will not say he can be justified by it. One would think then it must follow by unavoidable consequence, that an *internal* belief and persuasion of the truth is necessary to justification, at least, as a *mean* or *instrument* of it.

Why should this ranting writer censure his opponents for asserting what cannot be denied without overthrowing his own hypothesis; and which must of necessity be admitted as an undoubted truth; unless we shall affirm, that a man may be justified by that truth which he neither knows nor believes? Thus it appears, that all his pretended reasonings, and scornful declamations, against Protestant divines, for maintaining that faith is the *instrument* of a sinner's justification, are only so much idle and unmeaning jargon. And indeed on this, and every other subject he treats of, he writes in such a loose, rambling manner, as makes it evident, that he either knows not or cares not what he says.

It may not be improper to lay before the reader a specimen of his fine reasoning on this head. Thus he speaks: — "No stone has been left unturned to intercept the light of the sacred truth, and decoy our attention with an endless variety of the most abominable jargon about faith. The time and pains taken by the apostles in holding forth the heavenly ray of hope, have been employed

* Letters, p. 301.

" by

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" by thousands of preachers in directing us how to
" search for farthings in the dunghill.— The word
" merit, as applied to our faith or our endeavours
" after it, has generally fallen into disrepute among
" Protestants, as having been long tarnished by
" Popish fingers. Instead of it *condition* is often
" used with approbation. Yet this is likewise be-
" come suspected ; and many preachers scruple to
" use it without clogging it with some explications.
" Instrument, I think, is now the word least except-
" ed against. And this can serve us for *receiving*,
" *applying*, *closing with*, and *taking bold of* the pro-
" posed benefit. And this instrument is sometimes
" a *mouth* for receiving, and sometimes a *hand* for
" taking and giving. We are likewise told, that
" faith has two hands; one for taking home Christ
" to ourselves, and another for giving away our-
" selves to Christ. But if faith must be called an
" instrument, and if it be at the same time men-
" tioned, that justification comes by faith only ;
" then I am at full liberty to affirm, that he who
" is possessed of the instrument, hand, or mouth,
" is already justified, without regard to his using
" the instrument, his taking or giving with the
" hand, or receiving with the mouth. Thus the
" artifice by which they would impose upon us may
" be very easily discerned *."

Not to take notice of the letter-writer's profane scoffing at some expressions of faith frequently to be met with in Sacred Writ, and at the very words which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; nor of his wresting, in a most ungenerous manner, some popular expressions to a sense not only different from, but quite contrary to that which was commonly affixed to them by the preachers he speaks of ; we shall on-

* Letters, p. 284, 285.

ly observe, that the whole of his reasoning in the passages just now quoted, is every whit as inconsistent with his own hypothesis, as with what is taught by his opponents on this head, and indeed has no manner of sense in it ; unless we can suppose, that men may be justified by a truth which they neither know nor believe. When he allows, that the *savvng* truth, as he loves to speak, must be known and believed before men can enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof, it is evident he grants the whole of what his antagonists contend for, when they maintain, that faith is the *mean or instrument* of a sinner's justification. Did he imagine his readers would be so dull as not to perceive this ? It is indeed surprising, that a Gentleman of his penetration should have been so imprudent as to give such a manifest proof of his own folly and impotent malice, in attempting to impose upon us by an artifice which may so easily be discerned.

When this author tells us, that if faith must be called an instrument, and if it be at the same time maintained, that justification comes by faith ; he is at liberty to affirm, that he who is possessed of the instrument, hand, or mouth, is already justified without regard to his using the instrument * ; it cannot be thought, that by the faith he speaks of he means the *actual* belief or persuasion of the truth ; for, taking the word in this sense, the import of his assertion could only be this, that a man who is justified by using the instrument, is justified *without* using the instrument ; or that a man may believe without believing, or at least before he believes ; which is very like downright nonsense. He must therefore by faith here, doubtless, intend the *Faith, or grace of faith,* or, which is the same thing, a

* Letters, p. 283.

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power to believe; which is given by the Holy Ghost in regeneration.

That a man must have a *power* to believe before he believes, I think, can hardly be refused; that this power is *the gift of God*, conferred by the Holy Ghost in regeneration, Protestant divines, in conformity to the apostolic doctrine, have hitherto unanimously asserted. If *Palæmon* should deny this, he must allow, that all men have *naturally* a power to believe the gospel, or the saving truth, as he calls it, so as to be justified thereby. He grants, that a belief, or persuasion of the truth of the gospel, is necessary to justification; for he tells us, that *thereby* it becomes one's faith.* ; and this is as much as his antagonists assert, when they maintain that faith is the instrument of justification. But he will have it, at least if his words have any meaning: this must be it, that if the habit or grace of faith implanted in the soul by the divine Spirit must be called the *instrument* of justification, or which is all one, affirmed to be necessary in order to justification, then he who is possessed of it may be said to be already justified, without regard to the actual exercise thereof. Now this is in effect to assert, that every one who has a power to believe must be justified, whether he should ever actually believe or not. This is an absurdity which, if we may believe him, necessarily follows from that part of the popular doctrine which makes the supernatural implantation of the habit or grace of faith, in the soul, necessary to actual believing. But had he considered the matter a little more narrowly, he might have found, that by attempting to avoid an imaginary absurdity he has run himself into a real one: for if every one who is possessed of the habit of faith,

* Letters, p. 301.

or of a power to believe, is already justified; and if it be at the same time maintained, as of necessity it must according to his hypothesis, that this power is naturally in every man, the consequence must be, that *every man* is already justified. Such are the inconsistencies which a malignant opposition to the truth does often lead men into!

From what was formerly observed under this head it is evident, that the matter in controversy between the letter-writer and his antagonists, is not, Whether the *actual* belief or persuasion of the truth is necessary to justification? for this he himself allows, for this good reason, that it cannot be denied; but the question is, What kind of belief, or persuasion of the truth, it is, that is necessary to justification? Protestant divines have hitherto maintained, that a mere *historical* belief of the gospel, or of the facts recorded in the New Testament, is not sufficient for this purpose. And one would think the reason they assign for so doing is very strong, and almost equivalent to a plain demonstration. The argument if put into a syllogistic form would proceed thus: Every one who is possessed of justifying faith must undoubtedly be justified; but a general faith of the gospel, or a general assent to the truth of facts recorded in the New Testament, is to be found with many who are never justified: therefore a general faith, or assent to the truths of the gospel, and history of the facts recorded in the New Testament, is not justifying faith. The major needs no proof. The truth of the assumption can hardly be questioned, if we may admit the testimony of the Spirit of God speaking in the Scriptures as decisive in this case: for this assures us, that *over the world believe, and tremble*². Now

* Jam. iii. 19.

that the faith ascribed to devils in these words includes a firm belief of the divine authority of the Scriptures, and consequently of all the facts recorded, and of all the truths or propositions contained therein, I presume none will deny*. Further, the Scripture makes it evident, that many belonging to the human race have in this manner believed the gospel, who yet were not justified†. And our author himself plainly insinuates, that many believe the same truth which the devils believe and tremble at, who yet do hate and pervert it, and are utterly excluded from partaking of the benefit conveyed thereby to true believers‡. Now the truth of both the premises being evident, one would think the conclusion must be undeniably, namely, That a general faith, or assent to the truths of the gospel, and history of the facts recorded in the New Testament, is not justifying faith.

But, after all, if we may believe *Paleimon*, a simple belief of the bare truth, or of the facts related in the New Testament, is all that is necessary to justification, or all that is to be understood by justifying faith. Thus, when speaking of his believers, whom he opposes to those whom he calls the votaries of the popular doctrine, he says, "They have nothing in the heaven above, nor in the earth be-

* Hence it appears, that Mr. Gathrie's assertion, in his *Trial of a saving interest in Christ*, part 1. Chap. 7. namely, That true justifying faith is not simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon, may be very well vindicated. This *Paleimon* represents as a glaring absurdity; but if we duly examine the matter, we shall find it to be an undoubted truth.

† Acts viii. 13, 21, 23. John ii. 23, 24. vi. 66; Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. x. 26. ‡ Letters, p. 17, 405.

" low, to keep their hearts from sinking into utter despair, but the bare propitiation. This, and this alone, encourages them to make their addresses to God. By this, and this alone, God conveys the first taste of his favour and peace unto their hearts".

Were these and the like passages viewed by themselves, without any relation to that strange scheme of Christianity which the letter-writer is endeavouring to support, I confess, I do not see any thing in them that could be justly excepted against; nor do I suppose his antagonists would have scrupled to express themselves in the very same manner. They might doubtless have done so in full consistency with their doctrine and avowed principles, with regard to the several points in debate betwixt *Palæmon* and them. But however innocent the expressions above-mentioned, and some others to be met with in the letters on *Theron*, &c. may appear to be in themselves; when viewed in connection with other parts of our author's scheme, they will be found to contain several gross and dangerous errors, yes, the very substance of that false gospel which *Palæmon* would obtrude upon us as the ancient apostolic gospel.

When he affirms, that the bare propitiation, and this alone, quiets the conscience, relieves under apprehensions of guilt, and encourages the sinner to draw near to God; we are not to understand it as set forth in the word and promises of the gospel, so as that every guilty sinner to whom the gospel comes, may warrantably claim the benefit of it, or view it with particular application to his own fault, as a propitiation for his iniquities: for was this the meaning the sentiment would be extremely just.

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But it is plain, that, according to our author, what produces the several effects already mentioned, is only the bare persuasion, or the simple belief of the bare truth, *That there is such a propitiation or that Christ gave himself a ransom for many,* without the least view of any warrant that the sinner has to claim the benefit of it, or to rest the hope of the forgiveness of his sins, acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, upon the same.

In short, the sinner must believe, that there is a propitiation; but he must not *confide* in it, or venture to bottom his hopes of pardon, acceptance with God and everlasting happiness, upon it; but must find something else to lay a foundation for any assured hope of that kind. And our author has told us, plainly enough, what that is; that it is his own love to the truth, self-denied labour of charity, and acts of obedience*. Till a man is conscious of these; knows the former to be genuine, and the latter to be performed in sincerity; according to our author's doctrine, he has as little reason to expect any benefit from the atonement, as the devils themselves. These therefore, and these alone, are the foundation of his hope, and the source of his joy. He has nothing in the heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, to keep his heart from sinking into utter despair, but a consciousness of these, or some persuasion of the possibility of acquiring it some time afterward. This, an honest *Papist* would have told us, is not to obtain justification through the imputed righteousness, or by faith only, but to be justified by charity and good works; or, at least, partly by faith, and partly by works; the latter being every whit as necessary to justification as the former.

* Letters, p. 394, 395, 416, 417, &c.

When our author asserts, that by the propitiation, and that alone, God conveys the first taste of his favour and peace into the hearts of the guilty, a weak and inconsiderate reader may be apt to be imposed upon, by the agreeable sound of the words, so as to imagine, that, according to his doctrine, a sinner, by a believing view of the propitiation set forth in the gospel, does first obtain some real and solid persuasion of the favour of God, and peace with him, whence he is encouraged to draw near to God, with some degree of filial confidence and holy boldness. But that taste of the divine favour and peace which *Palæmon* tells us is conveyed into the hearts of men by the propitiation, and it alone, is so far from being peculiar to true believers, that the most profigate and hardened sinners that live, are seldom without it. These, when resolutely engaged in the most flagitious courses, and in the commission of the most enormous crimes, do ordinarily please themselves with hopes, that if they forsake their sins, and amend their lives, which they promise themselves they will do one time or other, God will have mercy upon them, pardon their sins, and save their souls. In like manner that taste of the divine favour and peace, which our author speaks of, is nothing but a kind of hope conceived in the heart of a sinner, that by exercising himself in what *Palæmon* calls the labour of charity, and self-denied obedience, he may come at length to be assured, that God will forgive his iniquities, receive him into favour, and reward him with eternal salvation, for the sake of the great propitiation; or, in other words, that when he has once acquired a personal righteousness by his own endeavours, or self-denied (I would rather call them self-clating) acts

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acts of obedience, he may expect to enjoy the benefit of the imputed righteousness *.

The miserable shifts *Palamon* is obliged to have recourse to, when endeavouring to work himself clear of an objection made to his leading hypothesis, with regard to justifying faith, from what the Scripture asserts concerning devils and reprobates, would move the pity of an adversary. When it is alleged, that what he calls justifying faith is to be found with the devils themselves, and he cannot deny it, without flying in the face of the Scripture itself, it must be allowed the objection is very plausible and strong, and that it is no easy task to make any suitable reply to it. Let us see then how the sagacious *Palamon* acquits himself on this nice subject. He very gravely tells us, "that, according to the Scripture, the same truth which saves Christ's people, torments the devils +." Very true; it does so: but, What is this to the purpose? This remark is so far from removing, that it really strengthens the objection. If the same truth that saves Christ's people, torments the devils, then doubtless they believe it; for otherwise it would give them no

* I speak in our author's dialect; but an intelligent reader will easily perceive, that the notion of an imputed righteousness must, according to this hypothesis, be purely chimerical; for it is really a man's own righteousness upon which any assurance of the forgiveness of sins, of the divine favour and acceptance, must be certainly bestowed. And therefore while we bewail the fatal mistake, we must commend the ingenuity of the *Rosomisks* in discarding the term, when they rejected the doctrine of imputed righteousness. We could scarcely wish our author had been as careful to institute their candour, as he has been solicitous to recommend their sentiments in relation to this point.

+ Letters, p. 404, 405.

uneasiness at all. The consequence is unavoidable: Therefore Christ's people are justified by a faith which is common to them with devils; or, in other words, there is no real specific difference between the precious faith of God's elect and the faith of devils. This the letter-writer must admit as an unquestionable truth, or give up his favourite notion: — but I am apt to think every one else, who has any suitable veneration for the Scriptures, will account it a glaring, shocking absurdity.

Though, according to our author's hypothesis, it must be granted, that the devils are possessed of justifying faith, yet it may seem harsh to affirm, that they are actually justified by that faith. However, should any be so bold as to aver, that they must of necessity be sanctified thereby, *Palæmon* will support the assertion; for he confidently maintains, "that there is no separating the agency of the Holy Spirit from the knowledge of the truth". If these words have any meaning at all, they must certainly import this much, that all who know the truth must necessarily be sanctified thereby. But he allows, that the devils know and believe the truth, the same truth which the apostles believed: for that undoubtedly is the truth which saves Christ's people. The conclusion is plain, though scarce fit to be mentioned: therefore, &c.

Thus we see, that the letter-writer, with all his pretensions, has not, after the most vigorous efforts, been able to offer any thing in answer to the objection taken from the case of the devils who believe the truth; but, either a kind of low and unmeaning obscurity, which has no other tendency than to darken the subject, and throw a mist upon a point in debate, or the most palpable absurdities.

one is almost ashamed to mention : and we fear he will find it no less difficult to bring off himself with regard to the popular preachers. That they and their votaries, as he calls them, did, and do, both know and believe what he styles the *simple truth*, namely, That *Jesus died and rose again*, and *gave himself a ransom for many*, he cannot refuse, for this good reason, that they zealously maintained the same*. To which we might add another, namely, that their whole doctrine, and even the very errors which he would have us believe they held and taught, are built upon a supposition of the truth and certainty of those things. They were then, doubtless, possessed of justifying faith. — Yet he more than insinuates, that they neither were nor could be justified by that faith. Hence the inference is native ; That men may have justifying faith, and yet not be justified : which, in other words, is the same as to affirm, that they may be justified and not justified, at one and the same time. The truth is, according to his hypothesis, there neither is nor can be any such thing as *justifying faith*; and therefore to talk of it is only to amuse and perplex weak readers, with a mere sound of words that either have no meaning at all, or a sense limited to them quite contrary to that which an innocent reader would take to be their native and genuine signification.

But we pass on to the consideration of another article of *Pelham's creed*, which is as follows :

* Letters, p. 8.

~~of the own mind; or of benevolence, or of good~~
~~disposition, or of virtuous action, or of~~

~~good works, his own merit, or~~

ARTICLE XIII.

*J*ustifying faith is no act of the mind, nor does it include in it any kind of activity.

REMARKS.

THIS is indeed a strange position; but after we have heard Palæmon affirming, that every one who is possessed of justifying faith is undoubtedly justified; and shall assuredly be saved, and yet, at the same time asserting, that many are possessed of it who are never justified, and never shall be saved: That there is no separating the agency of the Holy Spirit from the knowledge of the truth; yet allowing, that many who know the truth are so far from having any experience of his sanctifying influence, that they only, concerning him, and pervert it; there is nothing, let it be ever so unorthodox, senseless and absurd, that we may not expect to hear from him, if he only imagines that it can any way make for his purpose.

Justifying or saving faith is expressed many different ways in Scripture. It is called *believing*, or *holding unto*; *clinging to*; *running to*; *holding on*; *lay hold on*; *the hope set before us*, &c. And is none of all these expressions of faith imply any kind of activity? If they do not, we must certainly allow, that there may be both motion and action without any activity. This it seems is one of Palæmon's MYSTERIES, most of which are manifest absurdities, and palpable contradictions. But this

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Art. XIII. REVIEWED AND EXAMINED. 81.

Gentleman will tell us, that if faith, or any thing that is supposed to be necessary to justification, be a work or act of the mind; then men must be thereby so qualified as to be in a condition to advance some claim upon the Deity, and treat with him on some rule of equity; or so as they may find some reason about themselves why he should regard them more than others, and accordingly grant the favours they desire of him.*

This is just as if one should argue, that a beggar by stretching out his hand to receive an alms freely given him, does in this manner qualify himself to advance some claim upon the donor; or, that, by doing so, he presumes to treat with his benefactor on some rule of equity. The poor man must, doubtless, receive the gift before he can be possessed or enjoy the benefit of it. But one would think his receiving it when freely offered, and freely given, is so far from being any evidence of pride or presumption, that it is really an act of humility; as it implies a sense of his own poverty, and at the same time an acknowledgment of the goodness and generosity of his benefactor. If a needy person should reject and despise a gift, or alms, freely offered, it would undoubtedly be a sign both of pride and obstinacy; but to receive it can be no evidence of haughtiness or arrogance. Will the letter-writer affirm, that every indigent man who receives a gift freely offered to supply his need, by doing so must necessarily discover an opinion of his own wealth and worthiness, and claim what he receives from his benefactor as a just debt? If our author would assert this, it would be quite needless to reason with him. If he does not, what reason has he to quarrel with the popular preachers for exhorting their

* Letters, p. 345, 346.

hearers humbly and thankfully to receive the GIFT of God? Does he not know that those eminent preachers whom he opposes ascribe no more activity to faith, than is necessarily implied in believing the record of God concerning his Son, and in receiving the gift of God freely offered to them, and to all guilty indigent sinners who hear the gospel, in his word of grace and promise.

When *Palæmon* tells us, "That *Paul*, when speaking of the sovereignty of the divine choice of men to salvation, as proceeding upon grace, in opposition to every notion of desert in those who are chosen, distinguishes that grace in the following manner: *And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work:*" and adds, "That according to the apostle's reasoning, when God blesses any man of grace, he has no regard to any work, requisite, or motion of his will, by which he excels another," with a great deal more to the same purpose; he only betrays his own gross ignorance of that doctrine which he pretends to expose; or, which is still worse, wilfully and maliciously endeavours to conceal the true state of the controversy between him and his antagonists, that he may darken and perplex the mind of his reader, and the more easily fix a blot upon the memory and character of those worthy men, whose doctrine he has thought fit to attack. It is very true, that according to the apostle's reasoning, when God blesses any man of grace, he has no regard to any work, requisite or motion of his will, by which he excels another: but did ever *Paul* affirm, that men may be possessed of any blessing God

* Letters, p. 346.

bestows,

bestows, in the way of grace, without receiving it ; or that any sinner can be justified through the imputed righteousness before he receives *the gift of righteousness*? And did he ever teach, that faith, whereby men are persuaded of the truth of the gospel, and the divine promises, and receive *the gift of grace*, or the blessings freely made over to them therein, is no work or act of the human mind?

That God in giving his blessings to men has no regard to any merit, worthiness, work, or any good qualification whatever about them, is an unquestionable truth ; and it is equally certain, that true faith disclaims every thing of that kind, as being no way meritorious of justification or any spiritual blessing. But shall we hence infer, that men may be justified, receive, and become possessed of all the privileges and blessings of the gospel, without any kind of activity on their part ; or which is all one, without receiving *Christ*, or *believing on his name**? To assert this, methinks, would be to contradict the whole gospel : for there is not one passage in the New Testament which makes the least mention of faith in Christ, or of any of the blessings and privileges which are conferred upon believers for his sake, that does not either expressly assert, or

* Our author endeavours to persuade his readers, that the word *faith* in the New Testament is never to be taken *actively*, but always *passively* for the truth of the gospel, or the doctrine believed, in contradistinction to any exercise of the soul or act of the mind. But however the word *faith* should be understood, *BELIEVING ON THE NAME OF CHRIST*, if it signifies any thing, must certainly denote an act of the soul or mind. Now this in many places of the New Testament is affirmed to be absolutely necessary to justification. If ye BELIEVE not that I am he, says our Lord, ye shall die in your sins. John viii. 24. See also John iii. 18, 36.

plainly suppose the necessity of *faith*, or *believing in him*, in order to an actual participation of the benefits of his purchase.

But says the letter-writer, “ If we say with the apostle, that the faith of him who worketh not is counted for righteousness, we cannot affirm with Aspasio, *That faith is a work exerted by the human mind**. ” Why not? Because *Palæmon* will tell us this must lead us to say, that the privilege of justification, grace and comfort, are bestowed on him that worketh. Very true, if believing on Christ and working for life and salvation must of necessity denote one and the same thing. But what will this Gentleman say, if we should prove, that the apostle in the passage referred to does not oppose *faith* to *believing*, but *believing* to *working*? That he really does so cannot be doubted. If it should, to make it evident beyond contradiction, we need only repeat his own words, *To him that WORKETH not, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for righteousness*. It is plain, that the apostle, in this passage, by *faith* does not mean the truth or doctrine of the gospel nor yet the righteousness or blood of Christ, as *Palæmon* would foolishly insinuate; but *believing on Christ for righteousness*, or, which is all one, *believing in God through him*; which is said to be *counted to the beholder for righteousness*; not as if there was any intrinsic merit, or excellency, in the work of *Believing*; but because thereby the sinner apprehends, receives, and becomes possessed of a righteousness whereby he is justified, without regard to any merit, worthiness, or good qualifications in himself. And here *faith*, or *his own act*

* Letters, p. 346, 347. Rom. iv. 5.
of

of believing, is also excluded; not wholly and absolutely, but only in a certain respect; or so as to make no part of his justifying righteousness, nor any way belong to the ground of his acceptance before God. But the letter-writer would have us believe, that the apostle excludes it wholly and in every respect. According to this notion, than which a more senseless one, sure, never entered into the mind of man, the apostle's words must run thus, To him that neither worketh nor believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith, that is, nothing at all, is counted for righteousness. Thus *Paul*, to support his own absurd hypothesis, or rather to gratify a petulant, malignant, cavilling humour, by saying something in opposition to that doctrine * which is so great an eye-sore to him, though it is evident he could mean nothing †, will have *Paul* to contradict himself, and speak downright nonsense. But whatever freedoms he might think fit to use with the doctrine and character of the popular preachers, methinks, he should have acted with more decency and discretion, than to

* The Protestant doctrine, or the true doctrine of the gospel.

† For as, upon other occasions, he takes it for granted, that a man must know, believe, or be persuaded of the truth before it can become his faith, so as to be any way available for his justification; it is plain, that what he is here caviling against, does really make a part of his own scheme, as it must of every other scheme of Christianity that supposes a knowledge and belief of the truth of the gospel to be any way necessary to justification and salvation; unless we should allow, that a man may know and believe the truth without any act of the mind; which would be the same thing as to grant, that he may know without knowing, and believe without believing it; or, in other words, act without acting.

attempt,

86 PALÆMON's CREEED Art. XIII.

attempt, in this manner, to father his own senseless dotages and wild reveries upon the inspired apostle.

That faith taken for an act of the mind is necessary, as a mean, to the justification of a sinner, is no less a consequence of Palæmon's doctrine than it is of that taught by Aspafio and the popular preachers; for he acknowledges, that none can enjoy the benefit and comfort of the saving truth, but those who know and believe it. Now if knowing and believing are not acts of the mind, I would fain know what they are. If the letter-writer should alledge, that faith is only the evidence of divine truth appearing to the mind — we might ask him how this comes to be received into the mind, so as to be of any advantage to the person to whom it is proposed. I suppose there is no possible way of admitting it but by means of what are ordinarily called perception and persuasion. And can there be a perception and persuasion of any truth without any act or activity of the mind in relation thereto? If not, it is evident, that the letter-writer's hypothesis is liable to the very same objection that he has moved against what he calls the popular doctrine on this head; which indeed amounts to no more than this, That being justified BY FAITH, or BY BELIEVING IN JESUS, as the apostle elsewhere expresses it *, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ †.

After misapplying and perverting several texts of Scripture, and spending some pages in asserting and pretending to prove one does not know what, in a note at the bottom of p. 369. the letter-writer gives us such an explication of that passage in the epistle to the Romans formerly mentioned, as would lead one to think, that the apostle intended, not only to exclude the works of the law, but to set aside *faith*

* Rom. iii. 26.

† Rom. v. 1.

or

or believing itself, as being no way necessary in order to a sinner's justification, or to interest him in Christ and his righteousness. Thus he writes ;
“ Does not Paul say, *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?* Yea, does he not constantly oppose faith to works, to all works whatsoever, in this matter ? Is it then a fair way of reconciling the Scriptures, to talk to us of some ambiguous work, exerted by the human mind, in the matter of justification ? Let us either have works properly so called, or no works at all*.”

It

* Here, instead of reasoning and argument, methinks, we have downright *revery*. The apostle constantly opposes faith to works, while, at the same time, he intimates, in the strongest terms, the necessity of *faith*, or *believing* on the Son of God, as a mean or instrument of justification ; therefore we must constantly oppose faith to itself, and strenuously maintain, that it is in no respect necessary to justification. The apostle excludes all works whatsoever, in the matter of justification, while, in the mean time, he includes, and strongly asserts the necessity of *faith*, or *believing*, in order to justification : Is it then a fair way of reconciling his assertions to talk of the necessity of *faith*, or *believing* on Christ, in order to justification ? Or, which is the true import of the question, since the apostle excludes all works, in the matter of justification, and even *faith*, or *believing* itself, in every respect, or as being no way necessary to justification, and yet affirms the necessity of it in the strongest terms ; is it fair to imagine he does not contradict himself ? upon this supposition, I humbly think not. But the plain truth is, the apostle opposes faith to works, to all works, and even to itself considered as a *work of the law* performed by the sinner, in the matter of justification, or, which is the same thing, he teaches that no works, no, not *faith* or *believing* itself, is, or can make any part of the believer's

It is very true, the apostle *Paul* constantly opposes faith to works, to all works whatsoever considered as any way meritorious ; or as acts of obedience to the divine law contributing, more or less, in respect of merit or proper causality, toward our justification before God, or as any way belonging to the grounds thereof. But would this wrangling, raving sophister have us therefore believe, that *Paul* opposes faith or believing to itself, or to a receiving of the gift of righteousness freely offered in the gospel ? Unless he will be so bold as to affirm this, to what purpose is all his vain jangling on this subject ? Did ever the eminent preachers whom he shews such a strong inclination to defame, teach that faith justifies as a work or act of obedience to the divine law performed by the sinner ? Did they not constantly disclaim, and often shew, in the most perspicuous manner, the falsity, folly and danger of entertaining such a notion ; and always maintain, that faith, in the matter of justification, is to be considered only as an instrument, or necessary mean, by which a guilty sinner apprehends, receives, and becomes possessed of the gift of righteousness, and of all the spiritual blessings purchased by Christ and freely offered in the gospel ? But his great quarrel with them is, because they would not so far contradict the Scriptures, and renounce common sense, as to affirm, with him, that a man may have faith without believing any thing, or that believing is no act of the mind ; or, in other words, that

Tiever's justifying righteousness before God : while at the same time he plainly affirms the absolute necessity of faith, or that act of the mind so called, as a means or instrument of justification, or that whereby the sinner becomes actually interested in the righteousness of Christ, the only ground and meritorious cause of his justification.

it includes in it neither perception nor persuasion; for it cannot be denied, that both these are acts of the mind. It seems then his believers must be as void of any knowledge or persuasion of the truth of the gospel, as Heathens and Infidels, or else be justified by works. I know not whether he may have borrowed this *frantic* notion from his brethren the *Quakers*, who by *introverting*, as they call it, pretend to cease from all acts whatsoever, and to become like a piece of dead matter, that they may have more pure and intimate converse with the Deity: however his assertions with regard to the point under consideration must be allowed to be full as nonsensical and absurd, as any thing advanced by the most deluded *Sectaries*.

Before we leave this subject we shall only take notice of a leading fallacy that appears to run thro' the whole of *Palæmon's* reasonings in relation to the same. And it is this: He takes it for granted, that if we suppose there is any qualification, call it work, or act, or any thing else you please, by which men may be any way distinguished from others, even the most profligate of mankind, or in respect of which they may be said to excel their fellow sinners, previous to their justification, it must needs be considered as some way meritorious of justification, or at least as a reason why the Deity should regard them more than others. If it must be so, then we must conclude, either that none at all can be justified, or that Heathens who never heard the gospel, and even the most obstinate infidels, who to their last breath continue to disbelieve, despise, contradict and blaspheme revealed truth, are in as fair a way to be justified as those who know and believe it. Why then does this *rotting* writer trouble us with so many repeated assertions about knowing and believing the *simple truth*, about regarding and resting

resting upon it, as *the sole reason of hope?* Since, according to this notion, nothing of that kind can be of the least advantage to any man.

According to this extraordinary method of reasoning, we have as good reason to affirm, that he who believeth not is justified, as to assert, with our Lord, that *He who believeth is not condemned*: for, according to *Palæmon's hypothesis*, the faith of the one cannot in any respect be more available to justification than the unbelief of the other. And from hence, I think, the inference is native, though horribly blasphemous; That all which our Lord and his apostles teach, and all that we read in the New Testament concerning the excellency and necessity of *faith, or believing* — is no better than idle, unmeaning jargon; or, to be yet more plain, That religion is a dream, and the gospel a fable. Thus *Palæmon's ancient gospel* must terminate not only in absurdity and blasphemy, but in mere Scepticism, Infidelity, and Atheism.

Methinks the letter-writer would have acted a much fairer, and more honest part, had he, like his brethren the free-thinkers, thrown off the mask at once, and plainly told us, that the gospel is a fiction, and Christianity only a piece of *priſt-truſt*, whereby the leaders of the public religion, or the popular preachers in Christian countries, endeavour to maintain a sense of their own importance among the credulous and unwary, or to gain their favour by gratifying their pride. We can easily believe him when he tells us*, “That he might have been as profitably employed, and even with as much Christian piety, in attending the levee of the lady of *Lorretto*,” as in hearing the sermons of some eminent and god-

* Letters, p. 87.

ly preachers, and perusing their practical treatises; for we can allow him a great deal more, namely, that he might have received as much benefit by perusing the history of the lady afore-said, as ever he did by reading the New Testament. But however he and others of the same kidney may indulge themselves in a haughty, scornful contempt of the precious truths and doctrines of the gospel, we must still affirm, with the apostle, that they are *The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**; and, that *If the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*†.

From what has been already observed under this head it evidently appears, that, according to the letter-writer's hypothesis, it all is one whether men believe the gospel or not; since no faith, no knowledge or persuasion of the truth, nothing whereby they may be supposed in *any respect* to excel, or be distinguished from other men, even the most hardened unbelievers and obstinate Infidels, can be in the least available to justification, either as the *condition* and *ground* of it; which those with whom he has the warmest controversy never affirmed; or as a *mean* of interesting sinners in the righteousness of Christ and blessings of the gospel; which Protestant divines, in exact conformity to the apostolic doctrine, have hitherto maintained with one consent; and which every one must do who would

not

* Rom. i. 16. † 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

¶ The sentiments of our first Reformers, and of all sound Protestants on this head, are expressed with great perspicuity by the learned Chemnitius in the following words.

not chuse flatly to contradict what our blessed Lord expressly affirms ; when he says, *He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that believeth not is*

con-

Est fides instrumentum seu organorum illud, per quod in voce Evangelii misericordiam Dei remittentis peccata, & acceptantis nos propter filium Mediatorum ad uitam aeternam. QUÆRIMUS, APPREHENDIMUS, RECIPIMUS, & NOBIS APPLICAMUS. And afterwards that excellent writer gives a reason why the devil and his agents use their most vigorous efforts to obscure and pervert this great truth. His words are these : *Et hinc sit, quod Diabolus tam hostiliter infensus est doctrinae de fide : Quia enim decretum Dei de redemptione generis humani non potuit impediare : omne igitur suum artificium eo confert, ut organum applicationis vel eripiatur, vel labefactetur vel depravetur. Nosuit enim id quod Heb. 4. scriptum est : Verbum Dei auditum non proficere auditeribus, quorum fides non est admixta. Quia qui non crediderit condemnabitur.* Chemnit. in Examin. Decret. Concil. Trident. p. 796.

The whole passage may be thus translated.

" Faith is the mean or instrument whereby we seek, apprehend, receive and apply, or appropriate TO OURSELVES, the mercy of God, who forgiveth iniquity and accepteth us to eternal life for the sake of his own Son our Mediator, revealed and exhibited in the word of the gospel. And hence it is that the devil is so great an enemy to the doctrine of faith. For since he could not hinder the execution of the divine decree concerning the redemption of mankind, he uses his utmost endeavours either to snatch from us, or to weaken, mutilate and mar the only means or instrument of its application ; or that by which alone sinners can obtain an interest in, or be admitted to the actual participation and enjoyment of the benefits of redemption. For he is sufficiently apprised of the truth of what is declared, Heb. iv. 2.

That

condemned already, because he bath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*: and to shew the absolute necessity of believing on his name in order to justification and salvation, repeats the important truth, *He that believeth on the Son, bath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him* †.

As Palæmon in relation to this point, and in many other instances already mentioned, has had the assurance to assert and recommend some frantic notions of his own, directly contrary to the Scriptures; and the whole apostolic doctrine, one would think we might very well be excused from taking any further notice of his vain jangling and impertinent cavils against the truth; but as it is too evident, that some, mistaking sound for sense, have been wretchedly imposed upon by him, so as to be in hazard of making shipwreck of the faith — which they once appeared zealously to contend for; we shall take the trouble to examine some other dangerous and pernicious notions which he has woven into his new scheme of Christianity, and warmly contends for, as being part of the ancient apostolic gospel. And as he no where betrays his gross ignorance of the nature of saving faith more, or shews a greater disgust at the true doctrine of the grace of God, than in his sophistical reasonings against the particular application or appropriation of faith; what he has advanced with regard to this subject shall next be ta-

"That the word preached does not, cannot profit, unless it be mixed with FAITH in them that hear it. And that He who believeth not shall be condemned."

Hence Palæmon's flaming zeal against some eminent preachers of the gospel — may easily be accounted for.

* John iii. 18. † John iii. 36.

ken

94 PALÆMON's CREED Art. XIV.
ken into consideration. The substance thereof may
be comprised in the following article.

ARTICLE XIV.

*J*USTIFYING and saving faith does not include in it any appropriation, or particular application, of Christ, his righteousness and the benefits of his purchase, nor, indeed, any other or farther improvement of them, than what is included in the simple knowledge and belief of some historical facts recorded in the New Testament; such as, that Christ died and rose again, gave himself a ransom for many, and made an atonement for sin.

R E M A R K S.

*T*HAT justifying faith does in its own nature include an *appropriation* or particular *application* of Christ, his righteousness and benefits exhibited, promised and freely offered in the gospel, has hitherto been taught and maintained by Protestant divines. Many of them have defined it to be a firm persuasion, wrought in the mind of a sinner by the power of the Holy Ghost, not of the truth of the gospel in general only, but of the mercy of God in Christ, or of the remission of sins, and eternal life, through the righteousness of Christ to be obtained by the sinner himself in due time. Some call it a *fiducial apprehension*; some a *fiducial persuasion*; some a *fiducial application* of the mercy of God, and merits of Christ; others a *receiving and resting upon* Christ alone for salvation; or, which is the same

same thing, a fiducial recumbency on the mercy of God, and merits of the blessed Redeemer.

Now, under all these different expressions of faith, and many others of a like nature, it is easy to perceive an agreeable coincidence and uniformity of sentiment; and that every one of them necessarily implies an *appropriation or particular application* of Christ and the blessings of the gospel.

Some have expressed themselves more clearly and with greater precision, others more darkly and confusedly, with regard to this subject; but all Protestant divines that I know of, *Arminians*, some *Baxterians* of the grosser sort, and a few ranting *Sectaries* excepted, have agreed in maintaining, that a special application of Christ and his benefits is necessarily implied in the very notion of justifying faith*. This will appear evident, if we consider, that

* It is therefore very surprising, that Mr. Bellamy should have had the assurance to affirm, p. 112. of his *Letters and Dialogues between Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio*, that Protestant writers, for above three hundred years, have been testifying against this appropriation of faith founded on the free promises of the gospel; since every intelligent person, that knows any thing of the controversy between Protestants and Papists, with regard to the nature of justifying faith, must be sensible, that this is the very point they have been all along endeavouring to establish in opposition to the general doubtsome faith of the Romish church. I freely own, that among all the writers on controversy I have any acquaintance with, I have not found one, of any tolerable sobriety, who handles the matter in debate between him and his antagonists with so little decency and discretion as Mr. Bellamy has done. He has given sufficient evidence of more than ordinary weakness and want of judgment, which might have been some excuse for his indiscreet usage of two of the most valuable writers

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that those of them, who, through weakness or some mistaken apprehensions of the matter, have been most backward to admit what our first Reformers and some other excellent divines taught concerning the appropriation and assurance of faith, do yet, without the least hesitation, allow, yea strenuously maintain, that a *fiducial recumbency* on Christ and his righteousness, or on the mercy of God revealed and promised to sinners for his sake, belongs to the very nature of justifying faith; or, at least, that such a recumbency does always, immediately and necessarily accompany it. Now, this, in the very nature of the thing, strongly implies and necessarily supposes the *appropriation* contended for, yea all that is affirmed by Mr. Marball, Mr. Hervey, and others, when they assert that saving or justifying faith implies an *assurance* of a man's own salvation by Jesus Christ.

If a man who ventures to walk upon the ice of some frozen lake or river, over which he has occasion to pass, upon assurance given him by credible testimony, that it is sufficiently strong to support him, is confident he shall not sink, does not this necessarily imply a persuasion or assurance of his own safety? Would it not be absurd to suppose, that he is confident he shall be safe; and yet doubts, or is altogether uncertain, whether he shall be so or not? It is equally absurd to suppose, that a sinner may wholly confide in, and rely upon Christ for salvation, without the least degree of assurance, or cer-

writers that have appeared in defence of the truth and purity of the gospel since the reformation, had he not given too manifest proofs of a malevolent disposition also, by loading them with such accusations as persons of an ordinary capacity, who have the least acquaintance with their writings, must know to be entirely false.

tainty, with regard to his own salvation. Whatever warrants a *fiducial recumbency* on the divine righteousness as the sole ground of acceptance with God, must doubtless lay a foundation for an *assurance*, yea the *full assurance* of a man's own salvation by Jesus Christ ; and wherever the former obtains, the latter cannot fail to take place in proportion thereto.

We were just now saying, that *Protestant divines*, particularly our first Reformers, to a man, have asserted, either *directly* or *indirectly*, that a particular application of Christ and the blessings of the gospel, belongs to the very nature of justifying faith, or, which comes all to one, necessarily accompanies it* : therefore according to them none can be said truly to believe the gospel, or the testimony of God concerning his Son, but they who believe, not only that the elect, or believers, shall be justified and saved, but that the remission of sins and everlasting life through Christ are the *free gift* of God to *themselves in particular* ; or that *surely in the Lord they have righteousness and strength* ; every thing necessary, both to justification and sanctification, and to their complete salvation.

They granted indeed, that this persuasion admits of various degrees, being stronger in some and weaker

* These two different ways of speaking, with relation to justifying faith, in use among Protestant divines, if rightly understood, will be found to import no real difference, much less any contrariety of sentiment; yet the former is doubtless most agreeable to the Scriptures, which express *faith* or *believing*, by a *receiving* of *Christ*, an *eating* of *his flesh* and *drinking* of *his blood*, &c. for these and the like modes of expression certainly do in the strongest manner imply the *appropriation* or *particular application* of Christ and the benefits of his purchase. Accordingly our venerable Reformers did usually express themselves in this manner.

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ker in others, and often accompanied with doubting and many fears; but still they maintained, that without some degree of it no man can be justly denominated a true believer, or be justified; and that the promises of the gospel, without the least regard to any good works performed by the sinner, or any good qualifications about him, do lay a foundation for a full assurance of the favour of God, the forgiveness of sins, and everlasting happiness through Christ.

Such were the sentiments of those eminent divines who were chiefly instrumental in restoring the purity of the gospel after it had been for many ages wofully darkened and corrupted by the *Romish church*. This was the doctrine which, through the power of the divine Spirit accompanying it, did sap the very foundations of the *Antichristian kingdom*. It was the assured and lively faith of these important truths that did fill the minds and hearts of Christians in that happy period of Reformation with so much peace and joy; and animated that noble army of martyrs which then appeared with the *Lamb upon Mount Zion*, displaying the banner of truth in opposition to *Antichristian errors and abominations*, to undergo the most cruel tortures and exquisite sufferings, with such intrepidity and fortitude as frequently astonished their very enemies.

It must doubtless give every lover of the truth the greatest satisfaction to observe what harmony and unanimity did then take place among the witnesses of Jesus, ministers and others, in defending that fundamental article of the Christian doctrine concerning justification by *faith alone*, or the remission of sins and eternal salvation freely promised to sinners in the gospel, without the least regard to any inherent righteousness, merit, worthiness, or good qualifications about them. At present, we shall

content

content ourselves with quoting a passage from the writings of that renowned champion, for the purity of the gospel, *Martin Luther*, which may justly be considered as containing the substance of what was taught by our Reformers in that period concerning the nature and properties of justifying faith. That eminent servant of Christ, in his commentary upon the epistle to the *Galatians*, expresses himself in the following manner. " Faith — judgeth " rightly of God, namely, that God regardeth not " our works and righteousness, because we are un- " clean: but that he will have mercy upon us, ac- " cept us, justify us, and save us, if we believe in " his Son, whom he hath sent to be a sacrifice for " the sins of the whole world. This is a true opi- " nion of God, and in very deed nothing else but " faith itself. I cannot comprehend nor be fully " assured by reason, that I am received into God's " favour for Christ's sake: but I hear this to be " pronounced by the gospel, and I lay hold upon it, " by faith. — With faith always must be joined a " certain assurance of God's mercy. Now, this af- " surance comprehendeth a faithful trust of remis- " sion of sins for Christ's sake. For it is impossi- " ble that thy conscience should look for any thing " at God's hand, except first it be assured, that God " is MERCIFUL TO THEE for Christ's sake * †.

Those

* Old Eng. Translat. fol. 116.

† Mr. Bellamy, who is the first Protestant, professing to hold the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that I know of, who has presumed directly to attack *Luther's* doctrine on this head, is pleased to alledge, p. 175. of his *Letters and Discourses*, &c. " It was this" doctrine, " that prejudiced the Papists against the Reformation " in *Luther's* time." No doubt it was. It was the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of

Those who may be pleased to consult the writings of that excellent divine, particularly the valuable commentary above-mentioned, will find a great deal more to the same purpose.

This

the law, or the doctrine concerning the imputation of righteousness without works, that shook the foundations — and overthrew the main pillars of the Papal kingdom. One needs not be surprised then that *Papists* were prejudiced at it. The very same doctrine prejudiced the self-righteous Pharisees, false apostles and judaizing teachers, against the true gospel of the grace of God in *Paul's* time.

An intelligent reader, who has any tolerable knowledge of the gospel, needs not be told, that what *Luther*, and other Protestant divines in his time, taught concerning the appropriation and assurance of faith, founded on the free promises of the gospel, was the necessary consequence, or rather no more than a genuine explication, and proper application of the doctrine of justification through imputed righteousness. For to maintain, that sinners are justified freely through the righteousness of Christ imputed, and apprehended by faith alone; and yet assert, that no man has a sufficient warrant to rely upon that righteousness alone for justification, or, which is really the same thing, to bottom an assurance of justification and salvation upon that righteousness as exhibited in the word of the gospel, till he is first conscious of his own godliness and sincerity; is in effect to affirm, that though sinners in general must be justified freely by grace through the imputed righteousness, yet no sinner in particular ought, or has any warrant to believe, that he is, or ever can be justified in that manner, or without a righteousness of his own; or at least something in and about himself upon which he may with safety bottom an assurance of the divine favour, and his own justification and salvation. It is evident then, that Mr. *Bellamy's* zeal must have very far out-run his knowledge, when it broke forth

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This eminent Reformer, and other great lights, who by blowing the trumpet of the everlasting gospel were made instrumental in demolishing the walls of the Antichristian *Jericho*, constantly taught and maintained, that the declarations and promises

forth into the following exclamation. " Could I speak, " O my *Tberon*, with a voice like that of the archangel, when he shall wake up all the sleeping dead, " I would sound an alarm to all God's people through the Christian world, warn them against this delusion;" namely, of trusting wholly to the righteousness of Christ exhibited in the free promises of the gospel for the remission of sins and acceptance with God, with assurance of safety in doing so, " and invite them to return back to the old apostolic doctrine;" that is, to the old *Popish* doctrine of justification by works; or that doctrine which leads men to build all their hopes of acceptance with God, and everlasting salvation, upon their own godliness and sincerity. We would advise this Gentleman to think again, to consider the matter more attentively, before he sets the trumpet to his mouth a second time, to sound any such alarm. The faithful messengers of the Lord were wont to call aloud to the people of God to come out of *Babylon*; but what shall we think of this teacher who, with the most serious and solemn airs he could assume, invites them to return to H.E.R., to communicate with her in the greatest of all her abominations, namely, her doctrine of justification by the works of the law, whereby she has done her utmost to make the promise of God, and the cross of Christ, of none effect, and entirely to frustrate the grace of God? If charity should oblige us to allow, that he may have an honest heart, almost every page of his book will make it evident, that he has a very weak head, and was the unfitness person in the world to attack the doctrine and character of the accurate Mr. Marball, the judicious Mr. Boston, and the ingenious Mr. Heywood. See *Letters and Dialogues between Tberon, Paulinus and Aspasius*, p. 175, 176.

of grace in the gospel not only afford some ground of hope to sinners, but lay a foundation for confidence; for the faith and *full assurance* of the remission of sins and everlasting life through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, not *after* believing only, but *in* believing; and that an assurance of this kind, in some degree, is implied in the very nature of justifying faith. Agreeably to this they affirmed, that the foundation of a sinner's confidence and comfort lies not in any good works performed by him; in any consciousness of his own sincerity, or any experience of a gracious and sanctifying work of the divine Spirit upon his own soul; but wholly without him in the promises and testimony of God in the gospel; though they allowed, that experiences of that kind, with the several marks and evidences of grace that believers may feel, or after serious self-examination discern about themselves, are great helps and encouragements to a weak faith; as they are necessary to prove the truth and reality of faith, or distinguish true faith from that counterfeit faith, and presumptuous confidence that is often to be found with hypocrites and temporary believers; who, instead of having their hearts purified by faith, or of being influenced thereby to walk with God in a course of holy obedience, too frequently take a liberty to sin, because grace abounds; and always remain under the power of some darling lust, or secretly harbour and cherish some beloved idol.

In opposition to this doctrine the advocates for the *Roman* church pleaded, that faith is only a general assent to the history and doctrines of the gospel; which is the very same thing with that simple knowledge and belief of the bare *truth* the letter-writer talks so much of, and affirms to be all that is meant by justifying faith. Further; they strenuously

ously maintained, as he also does, that no appropriation, or particular application, of the promises and blessings of the gospel, belongs to the nature of justifying or saving faith *. They did allow, that the faith of the gospel is the source, or principle, of charity and good works, or, as *Palaemon* expresses

* *Fidei justificantis objectum non esse specialem misericordiam, sed omnia que Deus revelavit, probatur — ex Evangelio: i. e. "That the object of justifying faith is not the special mercy of God, but all things which God has revealed, may be proved from the gospels."* *Bellarmin.* On this passage the judicious Dr. Ames has this pertinent remark: *Bellarmino*, then, will undertake to overthrow the gospel by the Gospels. *Bellarmin.* *Eneroat. Tom. 4. p. 97.*

Aperiisse videmus fidem miraculorum, que non respicit specialem misericordiam, unam & eandem esse cum fidei justificante & salvante. — Fides in nihil aliud colligari debet, nisi in verbo Dei. At in verbo Dei, nusquam reperiunt annunciatu salutis, vel remissio peccatorum, mibi aut illi in particulari, exceptis quibusdam paucis. Non igitur possunt reliqui homines credare nisi omnino temere tanquam ex verbo, sibi remissa esse peccata. — Fides specialis misericordiae sequitur justificationem. Igitur fides specialis misericordiae non est fides justificans. — Fiducia qua quis confidit sibi remissa esse peccata pendet a BONA CONSCIENTIA, ac proinde praexigit justificationem, non illam efficit. Idem Bellarmin.

In these words of *Bellarmino* we have the very sum and substance of what is taught by *Palaemon* and Mr. *Bellamy*, A. M. of *Bethlem* in *New England*, in opposition to the appropriation and assurance of faith. And it must be owned, that *Bellarmino*, and other learned advocates for the church of *Rome*, treated the Protestant divines, whose doctrine they opposed on this head, with far more decency and discretion, than these Gentlemen have done their antagonists. Such advocates for the apostolic gospel have we now got !

it, of all true love and obedience to God; but still they affirmed, that any assurance of the divine favour, or personal hope of salvation, that men may be supposed to attain to, must be acquired by their own works of charity and sincere obedience; or, which is the very same thing, must arise from the experience of them who love God and keep his commandments. But as it is supposed, that men will frequently have too much reason to suspect the sincerity of their own love and obedience; Whether the former be genuine, and the latter such as God will accept of; they granted, that any hope of salvation men can attain to in this mortal state, must, and ought, still to be mixed with fear and doubting; or that by continuing to work in the way of *painful desire* and *fear* they must endeavour to make their title to the favour of God, the remission of sins, and everlasting happiness, as clear as they can, though they never can attain to absolute certainty about it. Such were the leading sentiments of the most eminent teachers in the *Romish* church: and these they strenuously endeavoured to maintain and propagate, in opposition to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law.

An intelligent reader will easily perceive, that most of these notions exactly coincide with what the author of the letters teaches with regard to the nature and fruits of faith, and the necessity of love and obedience, with a consciousness of both, in order to lay a foundation for an assured hope of salvation. Whatever strong things he seems to assert in his first three letters, as also in his fifth, concerning justification by faith alone, or the divine righteousness as the sole requisite to justification; in the *Postscript* to his fifth, and in his sixth letter, we have the very life and soul of *Popery*; a strong attempt to invent and propagate those very notions by which

the most zealous advocates for the church of *Rome* endeavoured to overthrow the doctrine of free justification through imputed righteousness. All the difference between him and them, with regard to this subject, is, that they were abundantly more ingenuous and consistent with themselves than he. Though they found it made for their purpose to maintain, that justifying faith is only a general assent to the truths of the gospel ; such as these, *that Jesus died and rose again, gave himself a ransom for many, &c.* they had more understanding and discretion than to assert, in direct opposition to Scripture and experience, that every one who is possessed of this faith is justified, and shall assuredly be saved. They knew very well that this kind of faith leaves every man possessed of it as uncertain about his justification and salvation, as before ; and therefore, agreeably to their notion of it, affirmed, that charity and good works are necessary to acceptance with God or justification, in the sense of Protestants, as well as faith.

The letter-writer, we grant, seems to differ from *Papists*, while he allows, yea, professes strenuously to maintain, that men are justified by faith alone. But if they are justified, the Scripture warrants us to affirm, and he himself grants it, that they shall assuredly be saved ; what was the need then for taking so much pains to prove, that the self-denied labour of charity, and acts of self-denied obedience, are necessary to lay the foundation for the hope of salvation, and assurance of the remission of sins ?

Whatsoever it is by which a man is supposed to be justified, he may doubtless be thereby assured of his justification and salvation. If it was certainly true, as *Palemon* affirms, that every one who believes, *that Jesus died and rose again, or made an atone-*

ment for sin, is undoubtedly justified; then immediately upon his believing theie, and the like propositions, he might be assured of his own justification and salvation, before he has had time to exercise himself in the self-denied labour of love, or in a course of humble obedience to the divine law. If our author should alledge, that love and self-denied obedience are necessary to evidence the truth of faith, or shew that it is of the right kind, this would be to yield up the whole cause, and in effect to grant, that the faith he speaks of is not justifying and saving faith; because, upon this supposition, men may have it, and be conscious of their being possessed of it, as every man may easily be who attends to the actings of his own mind in such a case, and yet still have reason to doubt whether they shall be justified by it.

It may further be observed here, that when one believes the gospel, or the bare truth, as *Palæmon* calls it, and knows that he does so, if he doubts of his own salvation, plainly shews his disbelief of that truth, *Whosoever believeth shall be saved*. Now, according to the letter-writer's hypothesis, every one who believes the gospel may, and must know certainly that he does so: for he plainly insinuates, that when one truly believes the gospel, a new set of principles, hitherto unknown, are forced upon him, by a most convincing and satisfactory, as well as irresistible evidence *; and a man certainly can never doubt, whether he believes that which he knows he cannot but believe. Hence it is evident, either that every one who has the faith contended for by *Palæmon* is not justified, or that those who are possessed of it have no occasion to lay a foundation

* Letters, p. 70.

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for a personal hope of salvation, and assurance of the remission of sins, by the labour of charity and acts of self-denied obedience.

When our author confidently asserts, that no man can be assured of the remission of his sins, but in so far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness*, it is plain he entirely gives up what he pretends, in many parts of his book, to shew such an uncommon zeal for; namely, the article of justification by faith; and really adopts the old *Popish* notion of justification by works. To affirm, that no man has any ground to believe the remission of his sins, till he has been led to forsake sin, and work righteousness, is in effect to maintain, that no man is, or can be justified, but in so far as he forsakes sin, and performs good works; or, in other words, that a man is not justified by faith alone, on account of the imputed righteousness, but by his own works of charity and self-denied obedience.

Whatever is supposed to be the ground of a sinner's justification, must also be allowed to lay a foundation for the faith of the remission of sins, and an assured hope of salvation. In this both *Protestants* and *Popists* were agreed. However much they differed about the ground, condition, or meritorious cause of justification, they both allowed, that whatever that was supposed to be, so soon as a man knows that he is possessed of it, he may be assured of the forgiveness of his sins, and eternal salvation: and indeed it is what every one must grant, who understands what he says, and whereof he affirms, when talking of justification. If then we must hold, that the righteousness of Christ, or his work finished upon the cross, is the *sole requisite*,

* Letters, p. 409.

to justification ; or that it is what every sinner who hears the gospel ought to rely upon, as the sole ground of his acceptance with God, and that which alone can intitle him to everlasting happiness ; it necessarily follows, that it must be so revealed, and set forth to sinners in the gospel, as to make it warrantable for them to rest their hopes of the forgiveness of sins, acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, *wholly* upon the same. Yet this nothing can warrant them to do, but a free promise of pardon and salvation, through that righteousness, made without the least regard to any good works done by them, or any good qualifications about them. Under the promise of the gospel affording a warrant, and encouraging guilty sinners to rest their hopes of acceptance with God and everlasting happiness upon the righteousness of Christ alone, are comprehended all the gracious declarations made in the gospel concerning the excellency and sufficiency of that righteousness, with God's approbation and acceptance thereof, as wrought out in the room and stead of sinners. Yea, as we formerly had occasion to observe, all that the gospel reveals concerning Christ, his incarnation, righteousness, offices and grace, in so far as it relates to perishing sinners of mankind, does necessarily imply such a promise : Upon which account, both the apostles *Peter* and *Paul*, when speaking of the gospel in general *, do with great propriety call it *a promise, of THE PROMISE.*

If anything, more or less, besides the divine righteousness revealed in the gospel from *faith to faith,*

* Including the whole history of the birth, obedience, sufferings and death of Christ, with all that is revealed in the Scriptures concerning his person and works. See *John xx. 31.*

be supposed necessary to quiet the conscience wounded with a sense of guilt, and fears of condemnation; it is manifest, that it cannot be said to be the *sole requisite* to justification. For it is undeniably evident, that whatever is sufficient to justify a guilty sinner must also be sufficient to quiet his conscience, and relieve him from all fears of wrath and future condemnation, so soon as he is possessed of it: and a sinner can in no other way become possessed of it, but by faith, or by *receiving* it, as the free gift of God made over to him in the word and promise of the gospel. One may merit something for himself by his own righteousness and obedience, as *Adam* would have done, in a certain respect *, had he persisted in his integrity, and fulfilled the terms of the first covenant; but it is impossible to conceive how one can become possessed of the righteousness of another, any other way than by *receiving* it, or having it imputed to him. And it is equally certain, that no man can know, or draw any comfort from the imputation of the divine righteousness, but in the way of *receiving* and *appropriating* it to himself †.

The

* Not properly, but by virtue of the *paction* or agreement God made with him.

† Remarkable to this purpose are the words of the evangelist *John* i. 12. *To as many as RECEIVED him, to THEM gave he power to become the sons of God, or the privilege of enjoying the benefit and comfort of the divine righteousness.*

There is a kind of legal, federal, or virtual imputation of the divine righteousness to elect sinners before faith, in consequence of that near relation and legal union which subsists between Christ and all who were given him by the Father, and whom he represented in the covenant of grace; but as it is only *by faith* that they become actually interested in Christ and his righteousness,

The whole business of faith, in the matter of justification, lies in receiving the gift of righteousness, which, in respect of merit, is indeed the sole requisite to justification.

From what has been just now observed it is evident, that the article of justification through the imputed righteousness alone, and the appropriation, or particular application of faith, by which only guilty sinners can become possessed of that righteousness so as to be justified thereby, are inseparably connected, and must stand or fall together. To deny the former, the letter-writer himself acknowledges, is to undermine and overthrow the whole doctrine of the gospel : for, says he, “ If more or less than the simple truth of the gospel be admitted in the heart of any man as a ground of acceptance with God, if either more or less than the bare persuasion of the truth be admitted as requisite to justification, the whole superstructure of the Christian practice and consolation is effectually undermined and overthrown *.” Now it is evident beyond contradiction, that if by the persuasion of the truth he speaks of, one does not become possessed of a justifying righteousness on which he may build a firm hope, and even the full assurance of the remission of his sins and everlasting salvation, it cannot, without manifest inconsistency, be said to be the sole requisite to justification.

teousness, it cannot be said that it is *actually* imputed to them before they believe : for if this was the case, one might be justified, and yet still remain an unbeliever ; which is contrary to the express words of our Lord, who says, *He that believeth not, is condemned already ; and again, He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, &c.* John iii. 18, 36.

* Letters, p. 417.

Thus

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Thus our author, like every other *heretic*, is condemned of himself, and convicted of no less a crime than that of attempting to undermine and overthrow the whole superstructure of the Christian practice and consolation; while he confidently affirms, and strenuously maintains, that no man can have any assured hope of justification, or of the forgiveness of his sins and eternal salvation, but what is bottomed upon his own love to God and self-denied labour of charity *, or, to speak in plain language, upon his own righteousness and sincere obedience to the law of God; and this, one would think, is to assert, plainly enough, that the divine righteousness, or the bare persuasion of the truth, neither is, nor can be, the *sole requisite* to justification; at least, that it cannot be so to us, but we must be provided with something of a very different nature, namely, an inherent, or personal righteousness of our own, before we can have any well-grounded assurance of the divine favour, and the forgiveness of sins. But we must not take our author always as he speaks. When he appears to assert, in the strongest terms, that men are justified by faith only, we shall not greatly mistake him, if we suppose his meaning to be, that they are justified only by works; or, which is all one, that it is only from a consciousness of their own sincerity, labour of charity, and self-denied obedience, that they can warrantably assure themselves of the divine favour and forgiveness.

Had *Palamon* considered, with any tolerable attention, what he wrote, doubtless, he would never have condemned that very notion, as having a tendency to overthrow the whole superstructure of the Christian practice and consolation, which he himself had been affirming with great confidence in the

* Letters, p. 418, 419.

sentence immediately preceding; namely, " That
" the assurance of hope is founded on experience
" of the love of God, and always holds pace with
" it; even as that experience is founded on the
" self-denied labour of charity, and always holds
" pace with it; and even as the self-denied labour
" of charity is founded on the simple belief of the
" truth, and always holds pace with it*." Me-
thinks, *Bellarmino* himself could scarce have asserted
the necessity of love and good works in order to justifi-
cation, or which both *Protestants* and *Papists* under-
stood as importing the same thing, in order to ob-
tain any well-grounded assurance of the forgiveness
of sins and favour with God, in stronger terms.
Yet the letter-writer has the assurance to tell us, in
the very next sentence, " That if either more or
" less than the simple truth of the gospel be admit-
" ted in the heart of any man as the ground of ac-
" ceptance with God, &c. the whole superstruc-
" ture of the Christian practice and consolation is
" effectually undermined and overthrown." Yea,
this he will have to be the necessary consequence of
his former assertions, with regard to the assurance of
hope. This is just as if one should say, A man is jus-
tified by works; therefore, he is justified by faith: or
Men are justified only by their own righteousness and
good works; therefore, the imputed righteousness,
or the righteousness of Christ, is the only ground of
their justification. Reasoners who cannot pretend
to the sagacity of a *Palamon*, who can, upon occa-
sion, make shift to reconcile the two sides of a con-
tradiction, perceiving a wide difference between the
premises and the conclusion, would be apt to deny
the sequel of both these arguments. But if any
should be so bold as to do so, *Palamon* will brand

* See Letters on *Tberon*, &c. p. 417.

them

them as enemies to the apostolic gospel. This is certainly a very great hardship.

We have already observed, that justifying, or saving faith does in its very nature imply the appropriation, or application of Christ and his righteousness to the soul ; or, which is the same thing, it claims a special interest in Christ and the blessings of his purchase* : — and this claim, and appropriation of faith, is not bottomed upon any good done by, or wrought in the sinner himself, or any good qualifications about him, but founded wholly upon the testimony of God in the gospel, or his free promise, wherein Christ, his righteousness and salvation, which includes all the benefits of redemption, are exhibited, brought near, and freely offered † to sinners of mankind ; to ALL who hear the gospel, without exception. And we need not stay to prove, that this is the very doctrine which has hitherto been taught, and zealously maintained, by Protestant divines, in opposition to the old Popish nation, that justifying faith is only a bare assent to the truths of the gospel, or, as the letter-writer phrases it, the simple belief of the bare truth ; and that faith is said to justify only as it is the spring, or principle, of that love and obedience to God upon which alone men can with safety bottom an affu-

* It does not believe any special interest therein, as what the sinner had previous to his believing, as Mr. Bellamy weakly alledges an appropriating faith must do; but it claims and receives, and, in so doing, believes a special interest in Christ, and the blessings of the gospel, which the believer neither had nor could have before; as no man can be said to be possessed of a gift till he receives it.

† Isai. xlvi. 13. Acts xiii. 26. Isai. xxv. 6. chap. lv. 1, 2, 3. Mark xvi. 15. Rev. iii. 18. chap. xxii. 17. &c.

sance of the favour of God, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation*.

We shall now proceed to examine what foundation the Protestant doctrine concerning the appropriation of faith has in the Sacred Writings.

And

* *Tribuitur fidei prima motio in Deum, per quam is qui longe erat, jam incipit appropinquare.* — *Fides est fundatum spei & charitatis.* Bellarmine. The passages may be thus translated ; “ The first motion of the soul toward God may be fitly ascribed to faith, whereby he that was afar off, now begins to draw near. — “ Faith is the foundation,” or principle, “ of hope and charity.” Let the reader compare what Bellarmine here affirms with what our author teaches concerning faith and hope, and he will easily perceive, that the doctrine of the latter is as like that of the former, concerning the nature of faith and foundation of hope, as ever an egg was like an egg. If any ill-natured person should conclude from thence, that *Palæmon* is certainly a Papist, we cannot help it.

Agreeably to the Popish notion of faith above-mentioned, Bellarmine contends, that men cannot be said by faith alone to receive, apprehend, or appropriate justification. His words are these ; *Sola fides non id habet, ut apprehendat justificationem, & nobis applicet, ac nostram efficiat.*

From these words we may easily perceive what was the true state of the controversy between Protestants and Papists, with regard to the influence, or rather the instrumentality of faith in the justification of a sinner. The former taught, that faith receives, applies, and appropriates justification, or, which comes all to one, a justifying righteousness with the several blessings procured thereby ; such as, pardon of sin, peace, and acceptance with God, &c. immediately as the free gift of God made over to sinners, through Christ, in the gospel ; and that in believing the sinner may come to be fully assured

And here in general we might observe, that almost every expression of faith we meet with in the Scriptures, every account that is there given of its nature, actings, properties and effects, might be offered in support of the Protestant doctrine on this head ; or to prove, that an appropriation, or particular application, of Christ and the blessings of the gospel, belongs to the very nature of justifying faith, and is altogether inseparable from it.

Faith in Scripture is called a *receiving* of Christ : and as there must, in the nature of the thing, be a *giving* before there can be any warrantable receiving of him ; when faith is called a receiving of him, it necessarily supposes, that he is first *given* ; given in such a manner as to warrant all the hearers of the gospel to receive him, as the gift of God to them. And that Christ is thus *given* in the promise and offer of the gospel, is abundantly evident from Scripture. He is declared to be so given to perishing

assured of the mercy of God toward himself in particular, and consequently of the forgiveness of his sins and everlasting life, without regard to any good works done by him, or any good qualifications to be found with him. The *Papist*, on the other hand, maintained, that there is no such appropriation, as that just now mentioned, in the nature of justifying faith ; and consequently that a believer of the gospel cannot otherwise be assured of the divine favour and forgiveness, than by the *intervention* of love and good works, flowing from the simple belief of the truth : and it is plain, that this is the very sentiment which *Paley* uses his utmost efforts to establish, particularly in the *Postscript* to his fifth, and in his sixth letter. And a strong attachment to this leading article of the *Papist* creed is the very reason why he inveighs, with so much warmth, against the *appropriation* and particular application of faith, taught by all sound Protestant divines, though less clearly by some than by others.

sinners,

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sinners, that *whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. His righteousness and salvation are said to be brought near to sinners, to the greatest and worst of sinners, who are privileged with divine revelation; even to those who are stout-hearted and far from righteousness*. We read of the *gift of righteousness* †: and eternal life is expressly declared to be the *GIFT of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord* ‡.

From these and many other texts of a like import it is evident, that Christ, his righteousness and salvation, including all the blessings of his purchase, are freely made over to sinners in the word and promise of the gospel, or the *gift of God* to them: and faith is a *receiving of the gift*. Now, it is not easy to conceive how a gift can be received without appropriation, or application. To receive a gift that one freely offers me, is, doubtless, to claim, take, and use it as my own; and not to take and apply to my own use what is thus freely given, is to reject the gift, and dishonour the giver. If faith is a *receiving of Christ*, it must therefore necessarily imply an *appropriation, or particular application of him to the soul*.

The letter-writer insinuates, that faith is only the receiving of a testimony, or the becoming possessed of a truth. This, no doubt, is implied in it; but it certainly includes somewhat more, namely, the receiving of **CHRIST HIMSELF**: and till there be a receiving of him, or an appropriation of him, and the blessings of his purchase, to the soul in particular, the testimony of God concerning him is never truly believed. A general faith, or the simple belief of any truth revealed in the gospel concerning Christ, without a particular application of him to the soul,

* *Isai. xlvi. 12, 13.* † *Rom. v. 16, 17.* ‡ *Rom. vi. 23.*
does

does no way answer the call and testimony of God in his word; but, in so far as it is separated from an appropriation of Christ, is only a counterfeit faith; such a faith as implies in it a practical disbelief of the record which God has given of his Son: for this is the record, that *he hath GIVEN TO US eternal life: and this life is in his Son* *. — No sinner therefore does *really* believe the divine record concerning Christ, till he believes it with particular application to himself. The very end and design of all that is recorded concerning Christ in the history of the New Testament, and of all that is revealed concerning him in the gospel, is, that sinners may believe on him, so as to make particular application of all that he has done and suffered, and of all the benefits of his purchase, to their own souls †.

None believe the gospel, or that *Jesus is the Christ*, aright, but those who at the same time believe, that they shall have life through his name. To believe that he yielded perfect obedience to the divine law in the human nature, and thus brought in an everlasting righteousness, will be of no avail, unless they are determined at the same time to believe, that *he is made of God UNTO THEM righteousness*. To believe that he was wounded, bruised and died, can be of no advantage, can yield no solid comfort, unless they are enabled to believe, that *he was wounded for THEIR transgressions, and bruised for THEIR iniquities; that he died for THEIR offences, and thus bare THEIR griefs, and carried THEIR sorrows*. A believing soul that reads the history of the sufferings of Christ, when faith is in exercise, will view them with special application to itself, and be disposed to say, *He was wounded for MY transgressions, and bruised for MINE iniquities, &c.*

* 1 John v. 11.

† John xx. 31.

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From what has been just now observed it appears, that *Alspacio* had very good reason to affirm, that an *appropriation* of Christ is essential to faith; yea, “that none have the proper scriptural faith, “but those who are taught by the enlightening “Spirit, to say,”—in the way of believing the divine promise and receiving the gift of righteousness, “He shed his blood for me*.” Though no preacher of the gospel is warranted to declare to any unbelieving sinner, that Christ died for him; yet he may, and ought, with the apostle *Peter*, to testify unto all his hearers, that the *promise* is unto *them*, or, that Christ is the *gift* of God to *them*; and that his righteousness is brought near in the word of the gospel, to be received, and rested upon by them, as the only ground of their justification before God. Being thus called to rest their hope of acceptance with God and eternal salvation wholly upon that righteousness, every one of them must, doubtless, be sufficiently warranted to say, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness*, believing assuredly, that, through the righteousness of Jehovah, our Redeemer, he shall be justified and saved; or, that this righteousness is *his* to all the ends and purposes of justification and salvation, as really as if he had wrought it out in his own person. Now, such a faith must, doubtless include in it, such a persuasion as is expressed in these words, “He shed his blood for me.” One who is authorised to call the Lord Jesus, *Jehovah, his righteousness*, and enabled, by faith, so to do, must certainly be warranted, at the same time, to believe, that whatever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for him; or, to say with the apostle, *He loved me, and gave himself for me* †.

But here we must carefully distinguish between

Letters, p. 5.

* Gal. ii. 20.

that

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that faith which is purely *dogmatical* and saving faith, or an *appropriating* and applying faith. By a *dogmatical* faith no sinner, on his first hearing the gospel, has ground to believe that Christ died for him; because the Scripture nowhere affirms, that Christ died for all mankind, or for such a one who for the first time now hears the gospel; but, by an *appropriating* faith, every one who hears the gospel is sufficiently warranted to believe, that the righteousness of Christ is the gift of God to him; and that through that righteousness he shall receive the remission of sins and eternal salvation: and his receiving Christ and his righteousness, in this manner, must, undoubtedly, imply a persuasion that what Christ did for the redemption of mankind was done for him. In the way of believing the testimony, and receiving the gift of God, a sinner, every sinner who hears the gospel, may warrantably view all that Christ did and suffered, or has purchased and promised, with particular application to himself, and say, *In him I have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. He hath made him to be sin for me,—that I might be made the righteousness of God in him* *. These and the like expressions are always true in the mouth of faith; though it cannot be said they are true with respect to all mankind, or any who hear the gospel, till they believe. No special interest in the death of Christ is the *ground*, or *immediate object*, of faith; but in believing the person attains to an assurance of it, proportionable to the measure and degree of his faith.

No man can be said to be possessed of a gift till he receives it; but by receiving it he becomes possessed of it. Till he receives it, he can have no benefit by it; but in receiving it he obtains a *special interest*.

* Ephes. i. 7. 2 Cor. v. 21.

terest in it, which he had not before ; and this is made evident to him * in the very act of receiving it †. There is a kind of interest in Christ and his righteousness which is common to all who hear the gospel ; upon which account these may, with sufficient propriety, be said to be their own mercies : but from this common interest in Christ none can certainly infer, that he died, or was made *fit* for them, or that they shall be saved ; yet it lays a foundation for the particular claim of faith, and makes it warrantable for every sinner who hears the gospel, to appropriate Christ and his benefits to himself ; and in doing so he not only obtains, but believes a special interest therein.

When the brazen serpent was made, and lifted up on a pole, for the benefit of the stung *Israelites*, and at the same time intimation given to the whole congregation of *Israel*, that every one who looked upon it should live and be healed ; this declaration and promise, made by the authority of God himself, gave all belonging to the camp of *Israel*, who had been bitten or stung by the fiery serpents, a common interest in it, whether they should ever obey

* Namely, in proportion to the measure and degree of his faith.

† This truth, one would think, is sufficiently evident, and needs no probation. In ordinary cases it is what no man doubts of. Yet this is the very thing which the letter-writer is pleased to call “ the grand secret of “ manufacturing truth without evidence,” and “ the “ great whirl-pool of the popular doctrine,” p. 433. But I am apt to believe every thinking man will concur with me in asserting, that, far from being an impenetrable secret, or unfathomable depth, it is one of the plainest truths that can well be thought of. I am sure in every other case men admit, act, and proceed upon it, as an undoubted maxim.

the

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the divine command, by looking upon it or not; but from this none of them could justly infer, that they should be healed; because notwithstanding this common interest they all had in the brazen serpent, the appointed mean of healing, if any of them should have been so froward and obstinate as not to look to it, they could not escape death, or be healed; yea those might know that they would as certainly perish, as if no such remedy had been provided for them. But in looking to the brazen serpent, in obedience to the command of God, every one of them had good reason to believe, and fully assure himself, that he in particular should be healed: for to have doubted of this would evidently have been to call in question the truth of the divine testimony and promise concerning the same, or, as the apostle expresses it, to make *God a liar**. It is evident beyond contradiction, that the very intent of the general declaration made to the *Israelites* concerning the brazen serpent, was, that every one of them might claim the benefit of that divine institution for himself in particular, and in doing so, by looking at the serpent of brass which *Moses* in obedience to the divine command lifted up and exhibited for their benefit, assure himself that he should be healed, though he could not certainly draw any such inference merely from the declaration itself, or the common interest he had in the remedy proposed: for by rejecting the latter, and thus manifesting a practical disbelief of the former, he might, after all, come short and lose the benefit of both †.

In

* 1 John v. 10.

† Those who with *Palemon* and the *Papists* contend, that men are justified by a general faith of the gospel, or, which is the same thing, by what they call a belief of the simple truth, might with equal reason affirm, that

In like manner * Christ, with his righteousness and salvation, being exhibited and freely offered to sinners without exception, in the promises and dispensation of the gospel, they have all a *common* interest therein ; yet none of them can certainly infer from hence, that Christ died for them, or that they shall be saved whether they believe or not ; but the call and free promise of the gospel give every one of them a sufficient warrant to *appropriate* the divine righteousness and blessings of the gospel to himself, by a true and lively faith † : and the divine testimony in which it is declared, that *He who believeth shall be saved*, assures him, that *in doing so* he shall certainly obtain salvation. And if he has ground to believe his own salvation by Jesus Christ, he must at the same time have sufficient warrant to believe, that Christ shed his blood for him.

If a skilful and generous physician should freely offer a remedy to his diseased patient, and assure him that by applying it he would be healed, the free offer of the remedy would doubtless empower the pa-

the simple belief of what *Moses*, at the command of God, declared concerning the brazen serpent, would have healed the stung *Israelites* whether they had ever looked upon it or not.

* It is not any popular preacher, but Christ himself who makes the comparison, *John* iii. 14, 15. and thus bears testimony to the truth of what *Palæmon* censures and reviles under the notion of the popular doctrine.

† So called to distinguish it from a counterfeit and dead faith, which is not really bottomed upon the word and promises of God, though for a time it may appear to be so. We desire it may be carefully remembered, that the appropriating faith we speak of is not a *barren Speculation*, or presumptuous fancy, such as may be found with hypocrites, but a *faith of the operation of God*.

tient to apply it ; and the testimony of the physician, could it be supposed to be infallible, would be sufficient to assure him, that in doing so he should be healed. Just so it is in the case under consideration. Christ and his righteousness are freely offered to sinners, and assurance given, that whoever will receive the gift shall undoubtedly be saved ; every sinner who hears the gospel therefore is sufficiently warranted, not only to appropriate the gift, but to do it in the full assurance of obtaining salvation by Jesus Christ : and this assurance does not arise from any reflection upon the act of appropriation made by the believer, or a persuasion of the truth of his own faith * ; but both the appropriation and assurance are built upon the promise and testimony of God in the gospel : yea in this case they are so undivided as to be both one ; for faith is that very persuasion which appropriates Christ unto the soul ; even as it is a receiving of Christ, and the gift of righteousness, freely offered in the gospel.

The question then is not, Whether there is any declaration, or testimony, in Scripture, that can assure any sinner in a state of unbelief, that Christ died for him, or that he shall be saved ? but, Whether the promise, call and testimony of God in the gospel, do not warrant every guilty sinner to rest his whole hope of salvation upon Christ and his righ-

* An assurance of this kind is what believers ought to give all diligence to obtain ; but it differs as much from the assurance now under consideration, as feeling, or experience, does from faith ; and therefore is called by some divines, properly enough, *reflex assurance*, or the *assurance of sense* : which is not only separable, but is often actually separated from the exercise of true faith.

teousness, and in so doing to assure himself, that his sins shall be forgiven, and he undoubtedly saved. To deny this would be expressly to contradict the divine testimony, in which it is declared, *That he who believeth shall be saved; That whosoever believeth on the Son of God, shall have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation;* and that faith is a receiving of Christ, and of the remission of sins, and eternal life, as the gift of God through him *. In one word, though no sinner who hears the gospel is called immediately, and at first instance, to believe that Christ died for him; yet he is sufficiently warranted to believe, that Christ and his righteousness are the gift of God to him; and that he shall have life and salvation *through his name*; and all upon the footing of the gracious promise, call, and testimony of God, in the gospel. Unless therefore we can suppose, that some sinners may be saved for whom Christ did not give himself a ransom, it can hardly be doubted, but he who believes in the manner afore-said may claim a special interest in all that the Redeemer did and suffered, and is sufficiently warranted to say, with the apostle, *He gave himself for me, or He shed his blood for me.* And it is most certain, that if this is not explicitly, it is at least virtually believed by all who receive and rest upon Christ for salvation †.

The

* Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 16, 18, 36. chap. v. 24. chap. i. 11, 12. Acts xiii. 38. chap. xxvi. 18. Rom. vi. 23.

† When Aspasio affirmed, that none have the proper scriptural faith, but those who are taught by the enlightening Spirit to say, *he shed his blood for me;* there is ground to think he meant no more than this; that an appropriation of the righteousness and death of Christ is implied in the very nature of justifying faith;

or

The due consideration of what has been already said will furnish us with an easy answer to the frivolous objections and impertinent cavils which *Palæmon* has thought fit to suggest and urge against the appropriation of faith. “ I would willingly know,” says he, “ by what authority *Aspasio* calls every one “ to believe that Christ died for him. The Scripture no where says, that Christ died for such a “ one who now for the first time hears the gospel : “ What then shall persuade him that it is true ? “ Will the grave affirmation and earnest call of a “ devout and revered preacher be of any weight “ in this matter ? Or is this a point whose truth or “ certainty is made out by the pains taken to believe “ it ? Or does the Spirit that breathes in the Scripture, whisper any thing privately to the hearer “ in confirmation of this, beside what he publickly “ speaks in the Scripture ? Perhaps it will be “ found upon inquiry, that the *appropriation* in “ question is supported by a concurrence of all “ these imaginations ; and not only so, but is also “ subservient to several purposes extremely foreign “ to the design of the gospel *.”

To all this we answer briefly, that the *appropriation* of faith is not founded on any of those wild imaginations ; nor is it in the least supported by them : but is wholly founded on the free promise of God addressed to sinners in the gospel, wherein Christ, his righteousness, and whole salvation, are made over to them by way of FREE GIFT, to be received by every one of them in particular. And though without the supernatural influence of the

or that the words he mentions, are *virtually* and *interpretatively*, though not always *formally* and *explicitly*, the language of saving faith.

* Letters, p. 20, 21.

Holy Spirit no sinner can rightly believe the promise, or accept of the gift of God therein exhibited; yet when the Spirit of God determines the sinner to believe the promise with particular application to himself, he does not whisper any thing privately to him *, but enables him to perceive the true import, and

* What relates to the *private spirit* which Palæmon in the passage above quoted, and in other parts of his book, makes mention of, and would have us believe, that his antagonists some way oppose to the Spirit of God speaking in the Scripture, is an old *Papist* cavil, improved by *Bellarmino*, and other champions of the *Romish* church, in opposition to the *Protestants*, in much the same manner as it is urged by the letter-writer against what he calls the *popular* doctrine. But this Gentleman might have known that his opponents never maintained, that the divine Spirit in working upon the heart of a sinner, and persuading him to apply Christ and the promises of the gospel to himself, makes any *new* revelation, or adds any thing to the written word. All that they taught on this head, was, that the special influence and illumination of the Holy Spirit are absolutely necessary for enabling men to perceive the *true import* of the word of grace and promise directed to them, and every sinner of mankind who hears the gospel; which they never do till they are taught to believe it with special application to themselves, so as to build their faith and hope of salvation wholly upon the same. As the *threatenings* of the law are applicable to every sinner descended of *Adam*, whether he should ever believe them or not; so the promise of eternal life through Christ is applicable to every hearer of the gospel as a ground of faith, whether he should ever believe it, so as to build his faith and hope upon it, or not. In a word, as the threatening of the law is not rightly understood till the sinner believes it with application to himself, so the import of the gospel-promise is never truly perceived.

and make a suitable improvement of what is revealed in the written word of God, and necessarily implied in the free promises of the gospel directed to sinners ; or, to use the words of the apostle, the Holy Spirit makes him to know *the things that are freely given him of God* *.

Had the letter-writer duly attended to a passage which he himself quotes † from the *Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio*, he might have found his idle cavils and objections against the appropriation of faith sufficiently obviated before they were made.

The passage is as follows.

“ *Ther.* May I then, from this instant, look up
 “ Christ, his glorious person, his perfect righteousness,
 “ and his precious death, as my certain inheritance ? May I firmly believe, that through this
 “ grand immensely meritorious cause, I shall have
 “ pardon and acceptance, true holiness and endless
 “ salvation ?

“ *Asp.* Why should you not believe all this firmly ? You have the same reason to believe with

perceived till a sinner believes it with particular application to himself, as being persuaded, that it is a sure foundation for his faith and hope of salvation to rest upon : yet he can neither do the one nor the other, in any proper manner, without the supernatural teaching and illumination of the divine Spirit. We grant there is this difference between the *treatise* and the *promise* ; that the former, being the declaration of a sentence already past against the sinner, supposing him to continue impenitent, will infallibly be executed, whether he should ever believe it or not ; whereas the latter, being only the *exhibition* of a gift, will not be fulfilled to any but those who are enabled to believe it, and thus receive the gift : but this does not at all affect the point in debate.

* 1 Cor. ii. 12.

† Letters, p. 8.

" a steady confidence, as to believe with any degree of assurance. It is the free promise of the gospel, addressed to *sinners* that warrants the latter; and the very same promise, under the same circumstances of unmerited munificence, authorises the former."

We meet with a great deal more to the same purpose in the *Dialogues*, &c. but at present we shall content ourselves with transcribing a paragraph which immediately follows the passage just now quoted, and is extremely pertinent to the purpose. Thus proceeds *Aspasio*: " You have heard my opinion, hear now what our Lord himself says; " Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. He may partake of my spiritual and unspeakable blessings, as freely as he makes use of the most common refreshments; as freely as he drinks of the running stream. This is his royal proclamation. — Hear his gracious invitation. Look unto me, and ye shall be saved from your disquieting fears, by justification; saved from your domineering corruptions, by sanctification; saved from every evil, by complete and eternal redemption. To whom is this most affectionate call directed? Not to a few distinguished favourites only, but to all the ends of the earth. None are excepted; none are prohibited; and can my *Theron* imagine, that he is excluded?"^{*}

After giving such a plain account of the scriptural warrant for an appropriation of Christ and the blessings of the gospel, what could be more impudent than for the letter-writer to ask *Aspasio*, by what authority he called sinners to believe in Christ, so as to make particular application of his

* *Dialogues*, &c. Vol III. Edit. 4. p. 349.

righteous.

righteousness and the blessings of his purchase to their own souls*? Before he renewed the question which *Theron* put to *Aspasio*, he should have considered the answer already given to it, and shewed, that it was not solid or pertinent. He should have proved, that there is no promise made, or given, to sinners in the gospel warranting them to believe on Christ for salvation; or that it is presumption for any sinner to receive Christ till he knows he has already received him. But we have not the least shadow of an answer to the many scriptural arguments adduced by *Aspasio*, though expressed in the most familiar and plain language, and copiously insisted upon, in support of his doctrine concerning the *appropriation* of faith. There is some ground to think our author was not altogether insensible to the force of *Aspasio's* reasoning on this subject, and knew that it would be no easy task to make any pertinent reply to him. However an honest attempt to do so would not at all have suited his

* This is really the import of the question he puts to *Aspasio*, though, taking advantage from some ambiguity in the words *Aspasio* sometimes uses, he would slyly insinuate, that the account this excellent teacher gives of justifying faith, is founded on the doctrine of universal redemption. But though *Aspasio* sometimes expresses himself in stronger language, and perhaps now and then less cautiously than some others on this subject would chuse to do, it is plain he meant no more than all Protestant divines have hitherto taught, either directly or indirectly, viz. That an appropriation of Christ and his righteousness, with the several benefits of his purchase, is implied in the very nature of justifying and saving faith; and that every sinner who hears the gospel is called so to believe on Christ as to RECEIVE him. And can he or any one else be justly blamed for this?

design; which, it is evident, was not to reason, but to cavil, censure, and reproach.—*Palæmon*, like every other wrangling heretic*, chiefly makes it his business to shift the point in debate, and to puzzle and perplex every subject he treats of †, that thus

* I know the very word *heretic* will be apt to offend some; but, for my part, I am not able to see that there is any more harm in calling a heretic a heretic, than there is in calling a man a man, or an angel an angel.

† It is very surprising to find some, of whom other things might have been expected, professing, that they have received uncommon light, with regard to some of the most important truths of the gospel, from the writings of this author; when it must appear evident to every impartial reader, that will take pains to examine the several parts of his scheme with any suitable degree of attention, that instead of throwing light upon any one article of the Christian doctrine, he has used his utmost efforts to darken and perplex the whole. I am apt to think those Gentlemen might have received full as much light from an attentive perusal of the decrees of the council of *Trent*, wherein the same opposition to the truths of the gospel, by which *Palæmon* has thought fit to distinguish himself, is managed with far more decency and discretion, yea with a greater appearance of truth, and without any such palpable discoveries of an impious and profane spirit, as we almost every where meet with in the *letters on Tberon*, &c. That men otherwise knowing and intelligent should be so easily imposed upon in matters of such importance, and shew so great weakness as not to be able to distinguish the plain truths of the gospel from the most pernicious errors, is indeed very strange, and can hardly be accounted for any other way than by supposing, what the Scripture clearly intimates, that, in the righteous judgment of God, some are in such a manner given up to the power of a kind of spiritual infatuation and delusion, as to be very easily induced to call evil good, and good

evil.

thus the invidious calumnies whereby he endeavours to wound the character of his opponents, may appear somewhat more plausible, and his own crude, erroneous and absurd notions find a more easy reception with his inconsiderate readers, who are not aware of the fallacious methods he takes to impose upon them. In this manner he endeavours to blindfold his reader, to confound his judgment, and perplex his understanding; well knowing that a blind man, or a man in the mist, may easily be led any where, and drawn into any snare that is laid for him.

Our author would make us believe, that the appropriation of faith is subservient to several purposes extremely foreign to the design of the gospel: but it were easy to shew, that it is the leading scope of the whole gospel, of all the histories, doctrines, exhortations, calls, invitations and promises thereof, respecting sinners of mankind, to lay a foundation for it. To confirm this observation we have the testimony of our blessed Lord himself, who says, *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted: that WHOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM, should not perish, but have eternal life**. The evangelist John gives us the very same account of the matter, when he says, *These are written, THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that BELIEVING YE MIGHT HAVE LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME*†.

evil; to put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Isa. v. 20. This kind of spiritual fascination effected by the power and energy of error, though one of the greatest judgments that can befall men in this world, is what the best natural or acquired abilities can be no effectual preservative against. See Matt. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 19, 20.—26, 27, 28. Psalm cxvi. 6, &c.

* John iii. 14, 15. † John xx. 31.

To believe in Christ so as to have life through his name, is to receive him, as the same evangelist intimates in another place. Now to believe on Christ so as to receive him, is doubtless to believe with particular application, or to appropriate him and the blessings purchased by him, and freely promised for his sake, to the soul. This is a truth so plain that it cannot be denied, unless we shall suppose that a man may receive a gift without appropriating it, or, which is the very same thing, receive it without receiving it. But this I am inclined to think every one but *Palemon*, and a few others, who have the same peculiar cast of understanding with himself, will account a plain contradiction.

Let not our author think to put us off here by telling us, that the receiving of a gift, *the gift by grace exhibited in the gospel*, is only the receiving of a truth, or some comfortable point of knowledge which the person knew nothing of before^{*}; for the Scripture makes it evident, that faith receives something more than a new point of knowledge, even CHRIST HIMSELF. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that BELIEVE ON his name.*

Faith in Scripture is called an *eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man*, or simply an *eating of him*: for our Lord directs us to understand these phrases of *coming to him and believing on him* †; and therefore they are not to be understood merely of any experience, exercise or activity consequential to justifying faith, but of the very first actings of faith upon Christ. This is so evident

* See Letters, p. 97, 301. † John vi. 12.
† John vi. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. compared with
ver. 35.

from the whole strain and scope of our Lord's discourse to the Jews, John vi. that it cannot with any colour of reason be denied. What food is to the body, Christ is to the soul. Now let provision ever so rich and plentiful be set before a hungry man, it is plain he cannot be fed and nourished by it, unless he takes and eats it. In like manner, though Christ, his righteousness and all his fulness, are exhibited to sinners in the gospel, they can receive no benefit thereby till they apply them to their own souls. If faith be an *eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God*, it must certainly include an appropriation and application of Christ in the very nature of it. These are *essential* to it, so that it cannot be without them. Whatever men may pretend, while they do not receive Christ by the appropriation and particular application of faith, they do not really believe the gospel, but treat it as an insignificant fable or unmeaning dream; and so lose the benefit of all that is revealed concerning Christ therein. Faith separated from appropriation is only an empty unprofitable notion, which no way answers the design of the gospel, but does really imply a rejection of Christ, and a practical disbelief of the record of God concerning him.

Further; that in saving faith there is an appropriation of Christ and spiritual blessings, is abundantly evident from many other expressions of it which we meet with in Scripture. It is called a *buying wine and milk without money and without price*; a *buying of Christ gold, and white raiment*; a *coming and taking of the water of life freely*, &c. * all which descriptions of faith do so strongly imply a particular application of Christ and the benefits of re-

* Isa. iv. n. Rev. iii. 18. chap. 22. 17.

Redemption,

deception, that without supposing this it is impossible to make any tolerable sense of them.

It may be further observed, that the Scripture gives us such an account of the immediate fruits and effects of justifying faith as necessarily supposes an appropriation of the mercy of God in Christ to the soul. The apostle tells us, that *being justified by faith, believers have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.** Whence I think it may be justly inferred, that peace, hope and joy, which are the genuine fruits and effects of *faith*, do not arise merely from experience in the hearts of them that love God and keep his commandments, or from a consciousness of their own sincerity, but from faith in the free promise of pardon and salvation through the righteousness of Jesus. This quiets the conscience formerly troubled and wounded by a sense of guilt, and encourages the sinner to draw near to God with holy confidence; as being now reconciled, well pleased, and pacified through Christ towards him for all that he has done. Hence we read of a joy and peace IN believing. *The God of hope, says the apostle, fill you with all joy and peace IN believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.* † The joy and peace which the apostle speaks of in that passage, are what take place not after believing only, but in believing, *in the very act of believing;* and they are accompanied with or rather flow from the faith of forgiveness and reconciliation with God through the death of his Son, and an assured hope of eternal salvation through his righteousness; which the apostle had formerly in the same epistle called *the hope of the glory of God.* ‡

* Rom. v. 1, 2. † Rom. xv. 13. ‡ Rom. v. 2.

The same truth is attested by another inspired and therefore infallible writer, in the following words : *In whom, or on whom, &c &c, believing ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* * The apostle does not say, *in whom*, having believed some time formerly, but, *now* †, believing in the present time ; intimating that the joy spoken of does not arise only from that sense, and assurance of the forgiveness of sins and favour of God, which according to our author believers attain to after they have been, for some time, exercised in the labour of charity and acts of self-denied obedience, but accompanies a *present* believing of the word and promise of God, or the report of the gospel, and is indeed inseparable from the exercise of saving faith ; whereby the believer does always obtain a sense of the divine forgiveness and favour, in some degree, namely, such as bears a proportion to the measure and strength of his faith.

It is not affirmed, that the same abundance of peace, joy and hope, is to be found with all who truly believe ; but it is plainly hinted, that they do always accompany *believing*, in a higher or lower degree ; and that what warrants or lays a foundation for the lowest degree of any, does equally warrant the highest degree of all these ; so that in the divine promise apprehended by faith, there is a sure foundation laid for the most solid peace, the most firm hope, and the most abundant consolation ; for *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* All that assurance of the divine favour and mercy toward the sinner himself, which the word and testimony

* 1 Pet. i. 8.

+ The true import of the word in this place is ascertained and clearly expressed by the phrase *now*, used by the apostle Paul, Rom. xv. 13. See also Matt. xxi. 22. John xx. 31.

of a God of truth can give, is given in this case. *Aspasio* then might warrantably tell *Theron*, “ That he had the same reason to believe with a steady confidence, as to believe with any degree of assiance ; the same free promise of the gospel, addressed to sinners, that warrants the latter, equally authorising the former.” The least degree of assiance, without which there can be no true faith, does in so far quiet the conscience and comfort the heart ; and a full assurance of faith, which is equally warranted by the promise of the gospel addressed to the chief of sinners, is accompanied with a full assurance of hope, and a plenitude of spiritual joy, or, as the apostle speaks, *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Peace, hope and joy, are the immediate fruits of faith. They are not produced by it merely through the intervention of the believer's own labour of charity and self-denied obedience, or good works, as *Palemont* and the *Papists* teach, but are so intimately connected therewith, as to be altogether inseparable from it ; as appears from the texts of Scripture, already quoted, and many others of a like import. Yea, we may be bold to affirm, that to this important truth give ALL the prophets witness : and the same is fully ascertained by our Lord and his apostles. And indeed to deny it, is in effect to affirm, that Christ exhibited to sinners in the words and promises of the gospel, is no better than a barren wilderness or waters that fail, that can afford nothing for the refreshment or comfort of the weary. For according to this notion a guilty, needy sinner cannot fetch from, or find any consolation in Christ, but by the intervention of his own charity and good works. The false apostles and judaizing teachers, in the apostolic age, taught that unless men were circumcised and observed the law of

Moses,

Moses, they could not be saved, or have any benefit by the righteousness and death of Christ. The votaries of the *Romish* church affirm, that without charity and good works no sinner can be justified, or has ground to expect any benefit by what Christ has done and suffered. And *Palaemon*, in exact conformity to the sentiments of both these sorts of men, strenuously maintains, that without the labour of charity and self-denied obedience a sinner has no ground to expect the least benefit by the merits of Christ.

But, in opposition to all such manifest corruptions of the gospel of Christ, we are warranted to affirm, That, antecedent to all working*, *in Christ believers have redemption, THROUGH HIS BLOOD, even the forgiveness of sins, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE*; or, which is the same thing, that a guilty sinner, antecedent to all good works performed by him, does through Christ by *faith RECEIVE* the forgiveness of sins, sanctification, and an undoubted title to everlasting life; and, in fine, that without the least consciousness of any merit or worthiness of any kind, that can distinguish him from the chief of sinners, he has ground to lay claim to, and assure himself of all these in the way of believing the promise of the gospel, and accepting of the gift of righteousness, with all the precious blessings annexed thereto which are brought near to sinners in the gospel; and that an assurance of this kind, some degree of which is

* Should any object, that faith itself may be called a work; we answer, that in the matter of justification, the inspired apostle opposes faith to works, to all works whatsoever, considered merely as works of obedience to the divine law: And why may not we? Rom. iv. 5.

implied in the very nature of saving faith, is always accompanied with peace, hope, and joy: all which arise *immediately* from the faith of the divine promise, exhibiting Christ and salvation as a FREE GIFT to be received by the guilty and unworthy, and not from any of the believer's own works, experiences or attainments.

Should it be alledged, that believers themselves are often subject to doubts, fears, and discouragements; and are even sometimes under such a cloud, or rather so environed with darkness, that they may be said to *walk in darkness, and have no light**; it might be sufficient to reply, that their perplexing discouragements and desponding fears, in such a case, are not owing to their faith, or any insufficiency in the nature of faith to quiet the mind and comfort the heart, but proceed wholly from their unbelief. We must carefully distinguish between the *habit* or *grace* of faith, which can never totally fail or be eradicated, but still remains in the souls of believers, and the *exercise* of faith; which, through the remainders of unbelief and spiritual darkness, may be sadly interrupted, if not wholly intermitted for a time. And what impedes the actings, and exercise of faith itself in the hearts of believers, must also proportionably disturb their peace, weaken their hope, damp and diminish their joy. But as the *seed*, or *habit*, of faith still remains in their hearts, whence they are justly denominated believers, even when the *exercise* of it is wanting; so do the seeds of hope and joy; and when that, through the enlightening and quickening influence of the divine Spirit, revives, buds and outgrows the weeds of corruption again, these are, by the same means, quickned, nourished, and strengthened.

* Isai. 1. 10.

Thus,

Thus, it still holds true of the Christian, that **BELIEVING**, or when enabled to glorify God by the present, lively and vigorous exercise of faith, he *rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* For this reason, our Lord prescribes the exercise of faith as the best remedy against inward trouble, all discouraging and desponding fears: *Let not your heart be troubled, says he, ye believe in God, believe also in me**. This exhortation exactly corresponds with the account given of the nature, efficacy, and effects of faith, by the apostles *Paul* and *Peter*, formerly mentioned; which makes it evident, that peace, hope and joy, are inseparable from the lively and vigorous exercise of it. Now, if these do immediately flow from faith, and are the inseparable attendants thereof; an *appropriation* of the divine righteousness, of the grace, mercy and promises of God in Christ, must certainly be included in the very nature of it: for it is impossible to conceive how the simple apprehension of those things, without any application thereof to the man himself, can afford the least relief to a guilty conscience; much less can it fill the mind and heart with that abundant peace, joy and hope, which the apostle ranks among the genuine and immediate fruits of true justifying faith.

When a guilty sinner, filled with a sense, and trembling under the most dismal apprehensions of divine wrath, hears of a perfect righteousness wrought out, and a complete salvation purchased, it must be very natural for him to put the question, What is all this to me? Have I any ground to expect the benefit of that righteousness, or that ever I shall share in the salvation purchased thereby? Perhaps, might he add, it is what none but the

elect, or men so and so qualified, are allowed to claim or expect the benefit of; and if so, such a sinful, guilty, vile wretch as I, who, though possessed of every evil quality, have no good qualification about me, must for ever despair: and whatever is revealed in the word of God concerning the love, grace and mercy of God, the perfection and excellency of the Mediator's righteousness, and the blessings procured thereby to those who have an interest in it, can only increase my anguish, and augment my horror. The gospel declares, that the righteousness of the Son of God, wrought out in the human nature, is the only justifying righteousness, and that every one who has not an interest in it must inevitably perish; How then shall I become possessed of it? What can warrant me to call it MINE?

According to the apostolic doctrine, the answer to these and the like important and puzzling questions is very easy. One needs only say, The gospel that reveals the divine righteousness, does also bring it near, as a GIFT to be received by every perishing sinner who needs a righteousness; and declares, that through Christ is preached to ALL

** Palæmon, in one of his ravings fits, out of which it is rare to find him, ridicules, as a most extravagant fancy, what is taught by some eminent preachers concerning the free offer of life and salvation through Christ, made to sinners in the gospel. This he tells us, p. 350. in a scoffing manner, turns out to be a gift of benefits to multitudes who are never benefited thereby. What then? Is there any absurdity in supposing, that some, yea multitudes, put away from them the word of life, neglect the great salvation, and reject the Saviour? Whatever absurdity he may imagine there is in such a supposition, we are sure our Lord and his*

belonging to the guilty race of *Adam*, who hear the gospel, the forgiveness of sins : So that, whosoever believeth in him, shall RECEIVE the remission of sins : and TO YOU is the word of this salvation sent. In one word, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and THOU shalt be saved. Take, and have. Christ, his righteousness, forgiveness of sins, everlasting salvation, and all spiritual blessings, are the gift of God TO YOU. Only receive what a gracious God in Christ freely gives, and ALL is your own. An undoubted, and an unalienable right to all, shall be yours in the mean time ; and the full possession of all, in due time, infallibly secured to you.

But the letter-writer perhaps will tell us we have now got into the very whirl-pool of the popular doctrine. May we then presume to ask him, what reply he would make to the interesting questions above-mentioned ? Perhaps he would catechise the awakened, desponding, despairing sinner in this manner ; Do you believe the gospel ? Do you believe that Jesus died and rose again ; and that he made an atonement for sin ? Yea, would the person reply, most certainly I do ; and am fully convinced, that none can be justified or saved without a special interest in Christ and his righteousness, which I neither have nor know how to obtain. Here again *Palamon* would readily make answer, You have no reason to doubt it, for the apostles never saw any in it : for they took it for granted, that multitudes by observing lying vanities, forsake their own mercies, John v. 40. Acts xiii. 34, 38. compared with ver. 46. Heb. ii. 3. That God made a grant, or deed of gift, of Christ himself, and therefore doubtless of his benefits, to a very great multitude, we have our Lord's express testimony, John vi. 32. If *Palamon* doubts whether they all received it, or were actually benefited thereby, we shall only desire him to consult the sequel of the chapter.

son to be in the least solicitous about an *interest* in the atonement ; if you only believe that there is one, you are safe. Safe ! might the sensible sinner say, without *any interest* in the atonement ; and while there is nothing, neither within me nor without me ; neither in my own experience nor in the divine word and promise without me ; to assure me, that I shall ever have the least benefit by it ? If I am safe, while for aught I know or can know, God is still mine enemy, Who can he in danger ? What a miserable comforter are you, who have nothing to offer for my relief, but what is built upon a supposition which I know as certainly to be false, as I believe the Scripture to be true, namely, that if there is an *atonement*, and a *justifying righteousness*, any man may be saved, whether he should ever obtain a *special interest* in it or not ?

Here I think *Palemon* must leave his *catechism*, thundering out all the vengeance and terrors of the law against him ; as one ignorant both of the gospel and the true God, because he will not believe what no man in his right wits can believe : namely, that he shall undoubtedly be saved through a righteousness which he has no warrant to claim any interest in, or expect any benefit from, more than the devils in hell *.

* It may not be improper to observe here, that the converts to *Palemon's* doctrine, most usually, are not sinners convinced of their guilt and misery, but sinners conceited of their abilities, gifts, knowledge, and attainments. And indeed it is no way surprising, that it should be so : for though that doctrine is extremely well calculated to flatter presumptuous and careless sinners, to make the licentious debauchee easy in his most criminal pursuits, and gratify aspiring pride ; it is plain there is nothing in it that can afford any suitable relief to a *thoroughly awakened* conscience.

The letter-writer indeed is pleased to say, “ The simple truth alone can quiet the sense of guilt, and furnish a man with the answer of a good conscience toward God, or give that perfection of the conscience which the — apostle says could not be obtained by the legal sacrifices ; ” — and that it gives “ a taste of forgiveness for past offences *.” In another place he affirms, “ That the gospel sets before us all that the most disquieted conscience can require, in order to acceptance with God, as already done and finished by Jesus Christ.” — And he adds, “ What Christ has done, is that which pleases God — and quiets the guilty conscience of man, as soon as he knows it †.” Quiets the conscience ! strange ! when yet it leaves a man as uncertain about the forgiveness of his sins, and the divine favour and mercy toward him, as ever he was. Can the simple revelation of a justifying righteousness give relief to a guilty conscience, while the sinner is no more warranted to claim an interest in, or expect any benefit from it, than the fallen angels ? which must be the case if he is forbid to appropriate it, or, which comes all to one, to rely upon it as the sole ground of his acceptance with God : for thus to *confide* in, and *rely upon* the divine righteousness, is doubtless to take the benefit of it ; which I apprehend is all that is meant by the *appropriation* in question. If the gospel affords no warrant to appropriate or claim the benefit of the divine righteousness, How can it furnish us with the answer of a good conscience toward God ? How can a man rest his hope of the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God wholly upon the same ? when, according to this hypothesis, it must be presumption to oppose it to any of those de-

* Letters, p. 417.

† Letters, p. 11.

mands

mands which the law and justice of God do make upon him.

If it is granted, that the gospel warrants a sinner to believe, that the righteousness of Christ is all-sufficient for his justification; and that he may with safety build his hope of acceptance with God and eternal salvation wholly upon that righteousness, and set it in opposition to all accusations and challenges brought against him by the divine law, or his own guilty conscience; then he must either appropriate it, saying, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness*, or disbelieve the testimony of God, or what the gospel declares concerning it, by accounting something else necessary to procure the divine favour and acceptance. If the former should be admitted, it must also be allowed, that what Palæmon styles the popular doctrine with regard to the appropriation of faith, is true. If it should be alledged, that something beside the righteousness of Christ is necessary to procure the favour of God and acceptance with him; or that something beside what the gospel testifies concerning it, is necessary to warrant a guilty condemned sinner to claim and take the benefit of it, by confiding wholly in it for pardon and acceptance with God. What becomes of the article of justification through the imputed righteousness, or by faith alone? It must certainly be cashiered for ever, and the old Popish doctrine, of justification by some kind of *personal merit*, restored and put in its place.

To talk of being justified by a righteousness that is neither *inherent* in a man nor *imputed* to him, would be absurd; to speak of being justified by an imputed righteousness without *receiving* it by faith, is every whit as injudicious; and to talk of receiving the divine righteousness and confiding in it as the sole *requisite* to justification, without appropriating,

ating, or making any particular application of it, as adapted to the guilty, necessitous condition of the sinner, is to rant indeed. — I am inclined to think it will pass for a truth, yea be allowed as an undoubted maxim, all the world over, that a man can have no advantage by any thing proposed to him under the notion of a benefit, but in as far as he appropriates or applies it to his own use. To assert the contrary would, I think, be much the same as to affirm, that one may be fed with the meat which another eats, warmed and adorned by the raiment which another puts on, or enriched by another man's possessions.

Palæmon will tell us, “ the gospel affords hope “ to the vilest transgressor, that he *may be* justified, “ that he *may escape* the curse, and find favour “ with God *.” Thus according to him the righteousness of Christ is a righteousness by which the guilty *may be* justified; that it is so revealed and exhibited in the gospel, that a sinner may *immediately* rest his hope of pardon and acceptance with God upon the same, he will not allow; but plainly insinuates, that no man can enjoy the favour of God, or have any ground to believe the remission of sins with special application to himself †,

but

* Letters, p. 339.

† We chuse rather to say that justifying faith is a believing the remission of sins with special application to a man's self, than to express it by a believing that one's sins are already forgiven him. Though this way of speaking may admit of a sound interpretation, it is more ambiguous and liable to misinterpretation than the former; for some may weakly, and others wilfully, mistake it, as importing a persuasion, that the person's sins are not now only, but were some time formerly for-

but in as far as he is conscious of his own love to God and the sincerity of his obedience. His words are these: “ No man, however sound his profession of the faith may be, can enjoy that life which lies in God’s favour, further than he loves God and keeps his commandments. —— No man can be assured, that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness. For we must still maintain, that the favour of God can only be enjoyed, in studying to do those things which are well-pleasing in his sight*.” Accordingly in his fifth letter, he is at great pains to prove, that the assurance of hope, or a personal hope of salvation, is founded, not upon the testimony and promise of God in the gospel, but upon the believer’s own good works and obedience to the divine law, or, as he loves to speak, upon the believer’s diligence in the work and labour of love. Hence he tells us, “ That the assurance of hope holds pace, first and last, with the work and labour of love †.”

Thus after all the strong things this Gentleman seems to assert with regard to the atonement and righteousness of Christ, as being the *sole requisite* to justification, he does more than insinuate, that we have no ground to expect, that ever we shall receive any benefit *thereby*, but in as far as we fear God and keep his commandments. Now, what is this, but in effect to affirm, that it is only our own personal righteousness that can intitle us to the benefit of the divine righteousness; or, in other words,

given him: whereas by *believing* with a true and lively faith, he *receives* the remission of sins, which he had no special interest in before.

* Letters, p. 408, 409.

† P. 394.

that

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that there can be no well-grounded assurance of the forgiveness of sins and favour of God, or hope of salvation, but what is immediately founded upon our own love to God and self-denied labour of charity? Therefore I can see no reason why the letter-writer might not in plain language have, with the *Papists*, told us, that men are not justified by faith alone, but by faith as, or in as far as it is accompanied with charity and good works, the latter being no less necessary to justification than the former. But our author was doubtless aware, that such plain dealing would have put it out of his power to impose upon the ignorant in such a manner as he might do, by amusing them with strong language, seemingly intended to support that doctrine which he had a mind, as far as he could, to undermine and overthrow; and might even expose him to the resentment of those weak readers who can warmly embrace the same very notions, when recommended under the plausible name of the ancient apostolic gospel, which they would be as ready as any to disclaim, censure and condemn, if set forth in the more plain and self-consistent language of an honest *Papist*.

When *Palæmon* affirms that faith, or the simple belief of the truth, as he is pleased to term it, is the only *spring* of that love and self-denied obedience on which, according to his hypothesis, the believer must bottom his assurance of the remission of sins, and his claim to any special interest in the favour of God and blessings of the gospel, it will not prove him a whit more orthodox than the most bigotted *Romanists*; for they will readily grant the same*.

If

* Cum *Apostolus* dicit, *justificari hominem per fidem & gratiam*: ea verba in eo sensu intelligenda sunt, quem per-

If no man has any reason to believe, that God will be propitious to him, forgive his sins and admit him to the enjoyment of his favour and mercy,
but

petuus ecclesiæ catolice consensu tenuit, & expressit: ut scilicet per fidem ideo justificari dicamur, quia fides est humanæ salutis initium, sine qua impossibile est placere Deo, & ad filii ejus consortium pervenire: gratis autem justificari ideo dicamur, quia nihil eorum quæ justificationem præcedunt, sive fides, sive opera, ipsam justificationem promeretur. Si enim gratia est, jam non ex operibus: alioquin (ut idem apostolus inquit) gratia jam non est gratia.

— *Quamvis autem necessarium sit credere, neque remitti, neque remissa unquam fuisse peccata, nisi gratis diuina misericordia propter Christum: nemini tamen FIDUCIAM & CERTITUDINEM remissionis peccatorum suorum jactandi, & in ea sola quiescenti, peccata dimitti vel dimissa esse dicendum est: cum apud hereticos & schismaticos, perficit esse, ima nostra tempestate sit, & magna contra ecclesiam catholicam contentionem prædicetur una hæc, & AB OMNI PIETATE REMOTA FIDUCIA. — Si quis dixerit, fidem justificantem nihil aliud esse, quam fiduciam diuinæ misericordiæ, peccata remittentis propter Christum, vel eam fiduciam solam esse qua justificantur, anathema sit. Decret. Concil. Trident.*

Tributar fidei prima motio in Deum, per quam si qui longè erat, jam INCIPIT APPROPIARE. — Fidem Abrabæ ex operibus dicit apostolus Jacob. ii. 22. consummatam fuisse. Hoc non potest aliud significare, nisi justitiam INCHOATAM PER FIDEM, accepisse incrementum, & perfectionem per opera. — Tamen si fiducia obtinenda veniat, qualis esse debet in homine penitentiam agente, præcedit justificationem, tamen fiducia qua quis confidit sibi remissa esse peccata pendet a BONA CONSCIENTIA, ac proinde præexigit justificationem non illam efficit. Bel-larmin.

I need not tell the judicious reader, who has attentively perused the letters on *Theron* and *Aspasio*, that the passages above-quoted from the decrees of the council

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but in as far as he loves God and keeps his commandments, then he has no ground to expect any blessings from God, till he is assured of the reality of his love to God and the sincerity of his obedience. In short, it is by his own righteousness and obedience to the divine law, that any comfortable intercourse with God is begun, maintained, and carried on. This is the foundation of his hope, and the source of his joy. We might then ask, What advantage have we by the gospel? How is the promise, or law of faith, distinguished from the law or covenant of works? According to our author's hypothesis, the only difference between them must be, that the former does only require sincere obedience, while the latter demands and insists upon absolute perfection, as the condition of enjoying that life which lies in God's favour; or as necessary to lay a foundation for any particular claim to everlasting happiness, or any promised blessing. But the apostle Paul gives us a very different account of the matter in his epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, when he opposes justification by faith to justi-

of *Trent*, and the writings of the famous cardinal *Bellarmino*, contain the very substance of *Palemon*'s doctrine, especially as it is expressed and explained in the Postscript to his fifth, and in his sixth letter. *Bellarmino*'s *fiducia obtinendæ venie*, or hope of obtaining pardon, which he supposes to go before justification, is the very same with that hope which *Palemon* tells us the gospel affords to the vilest transgressor, namely, a hope that he may be justified, &c. p. 339. In short, their sentiments with relation to faith and justification exactly coincide, though their words are somewhat different, and sometimes, one would think, quite opposite to each other. To say all in one word, *Palemon*'s doctrine in relation to these points, is either plain *Popery* or downright *nonsense*.

fication by works, and the *promise*, or the *gospel*, to the *law*. He tells us, that the *promise* given to *Abraham*, that he should be heir of the world, was not made to him, or to his seed, through THE LAW, but through THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH *.

The inheritance promised to *Abraham* having been typical of heaven and eternal happiness, with all the blessings of redemption, the apostle hence argues, that these are freely promised in the gospel; not promised upon condition either of perfect or sincere obedience, or any condition, but made over in the way of *free gift*, to be received by *faith*; that thus all the glory may redound to the rich, free, and sovereign grace of God; and that all boasting in the creature may for ever be excluded. Therefore says he, *It is OF FAITH, that it might be BY GRACE; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, &c. †.* Had the promise been suspended on any condition to be performed by, or found in the sinner; as it would not have been a promise of grace to be apprehended and applied immediately by *faith*, neither would it have been sure to all the seed, but still as uncertain as the knowledge of the truth and sincerity of their own obedience; which the best saints on earth often apprehend they have too much reason to doubt of, and many weak believers never attain to any full assurance of, even when *faith* is in exercise so that they can with holy composure, and humble confidence, venture to rest their hopes of pardon, acceptance with God and eternal salvation, upon the free promise of the gospel addressed to the chief of sinners, accounting that *He is faithful who hath promised.* Thus the promise is, and continues still to be *sure to all the seed*; a sure foundation for their *faith* and *hope* to rest

* Rom. iv. 13.

† Rom. iv. 16.

upon,

upon, however uncertain they may sometimes be about the sincerity of their own obedience, the truth of their graces, or other personal qualifications.

The apostle in like manner affirms, That *if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise**; that is, if the promise of justification and salvation was made only to persons so and so qualified, the gospel would differ nothing from the law; because, in this case, the promises of the former would be as really conditional as the promises of the latter. This indeed *Paulæmon* makes no scruple to affirm; for he tells us, with his usual confidence, "That the promises of the gospel are made only to believers †." And he will readily grant, that none ought to account themselves true believers till they are conscious, that they love God and keep his commandments; are freed from the service of sin and led to work righteousness ‡. Hence it is plain, that, according to him, the gospel promises nothing, no blessing, and far less justification and eternal salvation, to any but them who love God and keep his commandments. The inheritance, or salvation, which includes every spiritual blessing, therefore, being promised only on the condition of faith, love to God and self-denied obedience, must be of the *law*; and consequently, if we may believe the apostle, it is no more of promise. Thus, the whole doctrine of the gospel is vacated and superseded, subverted and overthrown; the covenant of grace turned into a pure covenant of works; and the heavenly gift which the gospel brings near to the greatest and most guilty sinners, set at such a distance, that it must be as impossible for them ever to reach it, as it would be to yield perfect obedience to all the commands of

* Gal. iii. 18. † Letters, p. 23. ‡ P. 408, 409.

the divine law, or fulfil the condition of the covenant of works: for they may as easily keep the whole law, as love God and perform any acceptable obedience to his commands, before they know and believe his love and mercy toward them through Christ.

At this rate, the doctrine of imputed righteousness can be of no further advantage to sinners, than as it may some way serve to animate and encourage them to work out a righteousness of their own, upon which they may with safety bottom their hopes of the forgiveness of sins, acceptance with God, and eternal salvation. And on this supposition to talk of justification by faith, or through the imputed righteousness alone, must be every whit as absurd, as it would be to affirm, that we must first be justified by faith, that afterwards we may be justified by works: which though agreeable enough to the *Popish* notion concerning a two-fold justification, the one by faith, which they call initial and imperfect, and the other by works, which they term complete or consummate justification, is doubtless the very reverse of the apostolic doctrine concerning justification without works. “ The gospel, by all it speaks of grace and atonement, would thus only present to us the tortoise after the elephant, and leave us still just where we were, when the pinch comes; even on the same footing with our ancient *Pagan* fathers, as to the great and primary question, What shall introduce us into the divine favour? Wherewithal shall we come before God *?” Yea, it would leave us in the same hopeless condition man would have been in, had there never been a Saviour provided for him. If our own righteousness and good

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works, our own love to God and self-denied obedience, must procure for us the enjoyment of that life which lies in God's favour, we are undone for ever: for the Scripture makes it evident, that all true obedience to God flows from the begun enjoyment of that life; and that *by the works of the law no man living can be justified.* We must then either be justified and obtain an interest in God's favour before, without performing any good works properly so called, or never be justified or enjoy the favour of God at all, but perish for ever under his wrath.

After what has been observed on this head it is easy to determine, whether the charge of embarrassing or shutting up our access to the divine righteousness, so as to hold forth a preliminary human one, as some way expedient or rather necessary to our enjoying the benefit and comfort of it, is most applicable to *Palæmon* or *Aspasio.* This charge as brought against *Aspasio* is without all foundation; for that excellent teacher maintains in the strongest terms, that the divine righteousness, and all the blessings of the gospel, are freely promised, or exhibited in the gospel, as a *gift* to be received by *faith alone*, and *immediately*, without respect to any inherent righteousness or good qualifications about the sinner himself: but the accusation may be justly retorted upon the accuser, who affirms, "that no man can be assured," that is, can have reason to believe, "that his sins are forgiven him; but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness;" and "that no man can enjoy that life which lies in God's favour, and this doubtless includes the whole benefit of the divine righteousness," further than he loves God and keeps his commandments."

If these words do not imply, that our love to God, righteousness and obedience, are some way expedient or rather necessary to our enjoying the benefit and comfort of the imputed righteousness, I confess, I am not able to make sense of them, and I doubt if any body else can.

That no sinner can with safety rest his hope, or assurance of the forgiveness of sins, upon the atonement or divine righteousness, till he is conscious of his own love to God and self-denied obedience, the letter-writer plainly insinuates. To establish this notion in opposition to the *Protestant* doctrine concerning the confidence and assurance of faith, bottomed upon the free and indefinite promise of the gospel addressed to sinners of mankind, seems to be the leading scope of the *Postscript* to his fifth, and also of his sixth letter. Now, as it is evidently the great design of what is taught in the Scriptures concerning justification through the imputed righteousness, to afford relief to a guilty, awakened sinner pinched with the impossibility of hope on every other side; such a firm belief of this doctrine as quietes the conscience, must certainly be accompanied with a sense of forgiveness: for it is not easy to conceive how a *sense of guilt*, which is the only thing that disquiets the conscience, can be removed without a *sense of forgiveness*. And it is no less difficult to conceive how there can be a *sense of forgiveness*, without any *assurance* or *persuasion* of forgiveness, or any thing to warrant or lay a foundation for such a persuasion. Yet the letter-writer expressly affirms, that no man can be assured that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness: which words, if they mean any thing, must doubtless import, that though the righteousness of Christ is acknowledged

nowledged to be the only meritorious cause of justification, some inherent or personal righteousness of our own, is necessary to clear, or assure us of our title to the benefit of that righteousness.

This is *Palæmon's* doctrine, and it is really the very whirl-pool of the *Popish* doctrine concerning justification. We need not trespass upon the reader's patience, by shewing at any great length how repugnant this *Popish* notion is to the true doctrine of the gospel; for the letter-writer has done this to our hand in the following words: "The question ought to be —— Whether or not did Christ finish upon the cross, all that God requires, every requisite without exception, to procure acceptance for, and give relief to the guilty conscience of the most profane wretch that lives? For I need not add, that it must be the very same thing which placates divine justice, or which fully expresses the necessary opposition of infinite goodness to evil or sin, that can relieve the sinner from the sentence of condemnation, which is no other, than the voice of God, naturally residing in his conscience. We must not go to borrow distinctions from the schools, and say, What Christ hath done is indeed the only meritorious cause of our acceptance, and that our assisted or prompted endeavours are to co-operate by way of some subordinate cause under whatever name. No; we must either take the one side or the other of the first and main question: *No trimming, no reconciling expedient must take place here **."

It were easy to shew, that the amount of this reasoning, as applied by our author, is plainly this: If it is granted, that the righteousness of Christ is

* Letters, p. 41, 42.

the only meritorious cause of our justification, the guilty must be justified thereby whether they ever believe on him, or by faith obtain an actual interest in his righteousness, or not ; which I think will easily be allowed to be the very reverse of the apostolic gospel, which every where asserts, in the strongest terms, the necessity of faith in order to justification, and any actual participation of the benefits of redemption. But here we shall only take notice of a concession made by our author, namely, “ That what satisfies divine justice must also relieve a sinner from the sentence of condemnation.” Now it is evident that a sinner can no otherwise be relieved from the sentence of condemnation, but by a *sense* or *persuasion* of the forgiveness of his sins. This must be granted, unless we shall suppose, that one may be delivered from condemnation and the fears of it, and yet for any thing he knows still remain under it. If the righteousness of Christ alone, then, is sufficient to relieve the conscience from a sense of guilt, it necessarily follows, that there must be such a revelation of that righteousness made to sinners in the gospel, as warrants a special and *immediate* application of that righteousness for the purpose afore-said, and this is the very sum and substance of what the author of the letters inveighs against under the notion of the popular doctrine on this head.

Many other arguments might be adduced in support of the *Protestant* doctrine concerning the *appropriation* of faith. It were easy to shew, that all the exhortations, calls, and invitations to come to Christ and believe on him for salvation, that we meet with in the Scriptures, require it as a duty; that all the promises of the gospel addressed to sinners of mankind authorise it ; that all the expressions of faith and confidence in God uttered by the saints,

and

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and left upon record in the Sacred Writings, do necessarily suppose it; that the condition of every awakened and sensible sinner necessarily requires it, in order to afford any suitable relief to his conscience, and remove those guilty fears which are the source of his inquietude; and, in fine, that the doctrine of justification through the imputed righteousness can afford no solid ground of hope, or comfort, to a guilty sinner without supposing it warrantable.

We might further add, that the very first commandment of the moral law, the preface to what is commonly called the Lord's prayer, and the very nature of true evangelical holiness, suppose it to be absolutely necessary in order to the acceptable performance of any part of that worship and obedience which God requires of man; and, finally, that it is altogether impossible, that there should be any comfortable intercourse with God without it. But as *Pelæmon* in the passage last quoted has fairly yielded the point in debate, by overthrowing that very hypothesis* upon which all his idle cavils and foolish reasonings against the appropriation of faith are founded, we reckon it unnecessary to insist farther in refuting his unscriptural notions with regard to this subject.

When the letter-writer insinuates, that the appropriating claim of faith founded not on any inward work of the spirit, but on the free promise and testimony of God in the gospel, serves not only to slacken our diligence in the work and labour of love; but also to feed our natural pride—and so strengthen our inclinations to all the lusts of the world†, he only revives an old *Popish* cavil, fre-

* Namely, that something besides the righteousness of Christ is necessary to relieve the conscience from a sense of guilt.

† Letters, p. 421.

quently

quently urged against the doctrine of justification by faith alone; which has been as frequently answered by Protestant divines, and sufficiently obviated by the author of the *Dialogues between THEBIRON and ASPASIO*; who has also by many irrefragable arguments, confirmed the Protestant doctrine on this head: in answer to which the author of the letters has advanced nothing solid or pertinent; nothing but a few senseless cavils, most of which tend to overthrow his own doctrine concerning the nature and fruits of faith, as well as that which he pretends to expose: and indeed so unhappy is this writer, that he seldom reaches any blow to his adversaries which does not rebound with equal force upon himself. He rarely makes an attack upon any part of their doctrine, but at the expence of giving up some one or other of those notions which, on other occasions, he either takes for granted, or endeavours to establish: so ill concerted is his scheme!

The *Jewish* or rather *Pharisaical* appropriation this author speaks of, and which, according to his usual ingenuity and discretion, he would confound with the appropriation of faith recommended by his opponents*, was not, like this, built upon the promise and testimony of God in the gospel, but founded upon some external privileges God had been pleased to confer upon the seed of *Abraham*; or, like the appropriating claims of such pretended friends of the apostolic gospel as himself, founded on a vain opinion of some personal merit and excellency in the claimants themselves, acquired by their own righteousness and self-denied obedience; or on such a fond conceit of some special relation to God antecedent to the *faith of his promise*, as

* Letters, p. 421, 422.

emboldens

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emboldens our author and his associates to arrogate unto themselves the title of the only believers and lovers of the ancient gospel, and of the only church of Christ or kingdom of heaven, in this world *.

As I would not chuse to render railing for railing, our author's insinuations with regard to a number of worthy ministers and serious christians belonging to the church of *Scotland* †, in this and the two last centuries, who have accounted it their duty to be peculiarly thankful to God for some distinguishing mercies and privileges he has been pleased to favour that nation with, particularly, by spiriting a goodly number of her members in different periods to join themselves to the Lord by solemn covenant, thus avouching the Lord to be their God, and coming under solemn engagements to walk in his ways and keep his statutes and judgments, I pass without farther notice; as being only the reveries of a distempered imagination, occasioned by a rooted disaffection, and malicious opposition, to that excellent form of church-government and discipline, which, as agreeable to the divine pattern, has been received, conscientiously observed, and zealously contended for, by the most godly ministers and members of that church, ever since the Reformation. This the pretended friends of the ancient gospel have thought fit to treat with the utmost contempt, and have not failed to use their most vigorous efforts for making it as odious as may be; but the virgin the daughter of Zion may securely despise all their virulent reproaches and impotent attacks —and answer every scoffing libertine and stubborn factary, who may presume to open their mouths against, and vilify that comely order and govern-

* Letters, p. 247. † P. 156—423, 424—443,
444; &c.

ment which the glorious King of Zion has appointed to be observed in his church, in the words addressed to an ancient enemy of the church: *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy one of Israel—Who will defend this City to save it, for his own sake, and for his servant David's sake**.

ARTICLE XV.

NO kind of trust, affiance or confidence in the promise, or mercy of God through Christ, belongs to the nature of justifying faith; but a man may truly believe the gospel, yea attain to a full assurance of faith, without putting the least confidence in the divine promise or mercy; or believing that he is at all warranted to do so, till by his own self-denied labour of charity, &c. he has acquired some peculiar claim to the divine favour and forgiveness; or at least something upon which he may warrantably bottom an assurance of both.

REMARKS.

WE have already had occasion to observe, that the sentiments of the letter-writer concerning the method in which a sinner attains to any well-grounded assurance of the forgiveness of his sins and certain hope of salvation, tally exactly with the Popish notion of justification by works, and are entirely repugnant to the doctrine of justification

* *Isai. xxxvii. 22, 23—35.*

by grace, through the imputed righteousness; so that if those are admitted, this must be given up as untenable and manifestly false: and when he denies, that justifying faith implies any degree of *affiance* or *confidence* in the promise and mercy of God in Christ, published and exhibited to sinners in the gospel, we have another clear proof of his agreeing with *Papists* in one of the fundamental and most material articles of their creed. And indeed they must have little acquaintance either with the doctrine of the *Romish* church or the *Protestant* doctrine concerning faith and justification, who do not readily perceive, that the opinion of the letter-writer contained in the article under consideration is the very soul of *Popery*.

When our *Protestant* divines, agreeably to the apostolic doctrine, maintained, that justifying faith is a *fiducial* application of the merits of Christ, and mercy of God, to the sinner himself in particular, or a *fiducial* recumbency upon the same—the advocates for the church of *Rome* still affirmed, that it is no more than a *general assent* to the truths of the gospel, which leaves a man altogether uncertain as to the forgiveness of his sins and eternal salvation: for according to them there can be no assurance of the former, nor well-grounded hope of the latter, but what arises from a consciousness of some inherent righteousness in the believer himself, or of the fruits of his faith appearing in works of charity and self-denied obedience. This is the very same with what *Paul* calls, “ experience in the hearts of them that love God and keep his commandments;” from which, according to him, an assurance of the remission of sins, and what he calls the assurance of hope do wholly arise*. And it

* Letters, p. 409. 416.

ought

ought carefully to be observed, that, according to his doctrine, the assurance of hopes includes in it all that *confidence* in the righteousness of Christ and mercy of God, for salvation, which *Protestant* divines usually ascribe to faith.

The very hinge of the controversy between them and their *Popish* adversaries, was, Whether the doctrine of free justification through the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the promises of the gospel exhibiting the same to sinners of mankind, do not lay a sufficient foundation for the faith, persuasion, and full assurance of the remission of sins and eternal salvation, freely given for Christ's sake, without the least respect to any good works performed by the sinner, or any good qualifications, experiences or attainments, by which he may be supposed to be distinguished from the most guilty, or the chief of sinners? Or, Whether something done by, or wrought in the sinner himself, with a consciousness thereof, is necessary to warrant and lay a foundation for the faith and assurance aforesaid? That both *Protestant* and *Popish* writers still reckoned equivalent to this plain question, Whether a man is justified by faith alone, through the imputation of the divine righteousness; or partly by faith, and partly by charity and good works, or some personal righteousness inherent in the man himself?

When therefore on the one side it was maintained, that a man is justified by faith alone without the works of the law, it was still meant, that nothing besides the promises of the gospel addressed to sinners of mankind, is requisite to warrant a particular application of Christ, his righteousness, and the blessings of his purchase; and to lay a foundation for the faith, and full assurance of the remission of sins and everlasting life, as freely offered and freely given, through Christ, to the sinner himself,

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self, without regard to personal merit or worth of any kind. And those, on the other side, who denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, impugned it only in this view; namely, as importing, that without the least respect to charity and good works, or any inherent righteousness, worth or excellency in the sinner himself, he is by the free promise of pardon and eternal life through Christ, made to sinners in the gospel, warranted to appropriate the divine righteousness and blessings of redemption, to himself; and confidently to rely upon the mercy of God through Christ for justification, sanctification, and compleat salvation.

Neither *Papists* nor *Protestants* were so injudicious as to imagine, that any thing can justly be said to be the *sole requisite* to justification, that is not at the same time sufficient to quiet the consciences of the guilty, furnish with the answer of a good conscience, and lay a foundation for assurance of the remission of sins, and the certain hope of salvation. Nor did they ever dream, that men could be justified by a righteousness which is neither *inherent* in themselves, nor what they have the least warrant to *appropriate*, or set in opposition to the several charges brought against them by the law and justice of God. Such *reveries* are peculiar to *Palmer*, and such brain-sick writers as he; who, rather than it should seem, that they have nothing to say, will not scruple to say any thing, that may tend any way to puzzle and perplex the matter in debate betwixt them and their antagonists, or gratify a petulant, cavilling humour.

Though our author will not allow, that justifying faith implies any particular *trust* or *confidence* in God, or a *fiducial recumbency* on his mercy and promise in Christ; yet as he has not offered the least shadow of proof for supporting his opinion in relation

tion to this point, we reckon it needless to enter into any long detail of arguments evincing, that a *fiducial application* of the merits of Christ and mercy of God in him, with a firm reliance thereupon, is essential to justifying faith. This has been often done to excellent purpose by *Protestant* writers, in their disputes with *Papists* about the article of justification, and the nature of justifying faith*. They have shewed by many irrefragable arguments, drawn from the different expressions of faith, the epithets given to it, the adjuncts of it, and the effects ascribed to it, in Scripture, that a *fiducial recompence* on the mercy of God in Christ is inseparable from true justifying faith. To none of these the letter-writer hath so much as attempted to make any reply; but, after his usual manner, has contented himself with throwing together a number of confident assertions, supported neither by Scripture nor reason, and indeed altogether inconsistent with his own hypothesis, namely, That the revelation of the divine righteousness, or the grace of God manifested in the atonement, is sufficient to refresh the

* Among others, the learned *Cheznitius*, in his Examination of the decrees of the council of Trent and disputes with *Andradus* concerning justification and faith, has handled this point very succinctly, and with great judgment and perspicuity. See also *Amesius* cont. *Bellarmin*. In the writings of this excellent author, most of the cavils against what is called the popular doctrine about faith, that we meet with in the *Letters on THERON*, &c. are considered and refuted in the answers given to *Bellarmino*, who made, and, with far more discretion, urged the very same objections against the *Protestant* doctrine concerning a *fiducial apprehension*, or application of the mercy of God in Christ, as belonging to the very nature of justifying and saving faith.

mind,

mind, and quiet the conscience of the guilty thoroughly pinched with the impossibility of hope on every other side ; and that they may with safety rest their hope of acceptance with God wholly upon the same ; yea that they must either do so or disbelieve the gospel, and shew a disgust at the true doctrine of the grace of God manifested in the atonement.

We might ask this author, if the great atonement and the divine grace manifested therein, are not so revealed in the gospel, that every sinner who hears it is sufficiently warranted to rely wholly upon the same for acceptance with God and eternal salvation, when every other door of hope is blocked up or shut against him, and he finds himself destitute of every good qualification that might in the least recommend him to the favour of God ; yea, upon a level with the greatest transgressors ? This we presume he will readily grant, for this good reason, that he often asserts it ; and it would seem to be the main scope of a great part of his book to establish it. And, I think, it will hardly be denied, that to rely wholly upon the divine righteousness for justification and salvation, is, in the most proper sense, to *confide* in it.

Palamon will further allow, that let man have ever such clear and bright notions concerning the person and work of Christ, and be ever so zealous in defending them ; if they really, or practically, admit any thing besides, or along with the righteousness of Christ, or, as he is pleased to call it, his *bare work* finished on the cross, as a ground of their acceptance with God, they cannot be accounted true believers of the gospel, or be said to be possessed of a justifying faith*. From hence, one

* Letters, p. 8, compared with p. 304, 339, 342, &c.

would

would think, it must necessarily follow, that a particular *trust* or *confidence* in the righteousness of Christ, and mercy of God in him, bottomed wholly upon the revelation that is made of both to sinners in the gospel, is inseparable from justifying faith, and consequently belongs to the very nature of it ; yet this is the very conclusion which, to our great surprise, did we not know the manner of the man, the letter-writer uses his utmost efforts to overthrow in the latter part of his book. For there he tells us, that the assurance of hope, which his *Popish* friends, and their antagonists too, always took to be inseparably connected with a particular trust in the mercy of God through Christ, or a firm reliance on the divine righteousness for acceptance with God and eternal salvation, arises only from experience in the hearts of them who love God and keep his commandments.

Thus, after all his high-swelling words of vanity with regard to the *atonement* and *imputed righteousness*, as being the sole ground of acceptance with God, he settles in the old *Popish* notion, that a particular claim to the benefit of the divine righteousness must be founded on, or at least *ascertained* by our own love to God and self-denied obedience ; which is the very thing *Papists* would teach us, when they call charity the *form of faith*, and tell us, that by charity and good works faith is perfected.

That this is really the purport of what our author teaches on this head, will further appear, if we consider, that he makes the actual enjoyment of any *personal benefit* resulting from the *atonement* *,

* Such as, assurance of pardon and reconciliation with God, peace of conscience, joy and hope, arising from a sense of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, &c.

which, according to the apostolic doctrine, and what all sound divines have hitherto taught agreeably thereto, is the *immediate consequence* of receiving it by faith, to depend upon, or arise from the sinner's own personal righteousness or obedience to the commands of God. For, says he, "No man—can enjoy that life which lies in God's favour, further than he loves God and keeps his commandments;" and again, "We must still maintain, that the favour of God can only be enjoyed, in studying to do those things which are well-pleasing in his sight."

This he attempts to illustrate in the following manner: "If a man of low condition is by a royal patent ennobled, and intitled to a place in the politest assemblies; he cannot enjoy the pleasure of his promotion, but in as far as he loves and studies to learn the manners suitable to his rank and new company *." — He acknowledges, that this similitude does not answer the case in all respects, but it were easy to shew, that it does not answer it at all, nor is any way pertinent to his purpose. It might indeed, with some propriety, be used for illustrating what he calls the popular doctrine concerning the necessity of sanctification as well as justification, in order to true happiness; as it is only a soul renewed and sanctified that can suitably prize, or take any real delight and satisfaction in the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings and privileges which justification gives a title to; but it does not at all comport with his hypothesis: for he supposes, that love to God and self-denied obedience are not merely fruits and effects of faith, or necessary consequences of justification, but the very foundation of any particular claim, or at least ne-

* Letters, p. 409.

cessary

cessary to ascertain one's title to the benefit of the divine righteousness. He tells us, " That every claim to peculiar relation to God, that rests not on the Spirit bearing witness as a comforter to the work and labour of love, serves not only to slacken our diligence in that work and labour, but also to feed our natural pride, which may be more exquisitely gratified in the religious way than in any other; and so to strengthen our inclinations to all the lusts of the world." *

If it is considered, that our author expresses himself thus in direct opposition to the *Protestant* doctrine concerning a particular application, or appropriation, of the righteousness of Christ and benefits of redemption, as being included in the very nature of justifying faith, the import of his words must be plainly this; that none can warrantably claim the benefit of the divine righteousness, including pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and every other spiritual blessing, till he is conscious of being employed in the work and labour of love, or of his own love to God, and the sincerity of his obedience to the divine commands.

This author indeed elsewhere affirms, that the divine righteousness is all-sufficient, and the sole requisite to justification; but from what has been just now observed, it is evident, that however all-sufficient to justification that righteousness may be supposed to be, no individual of mankind, according to his hypothesis, has ground to believe, that it is all-sufficient to his justification, or that he shall ever have the least benefit thereby, unless he is in the first place assured of his own love to God, and the sincerity of his obedience. Thus the guilty and unworthy are entirely cut off from having any claim

* Letters, p. 421.

to the benefit of that righteousness—and none but holy and righteous persons have any immediate concern with it; or, at least, none but those can with safety bottom their hopes of pardon and acceptance with God wholly upon the same*: whence it necessarily follows, that they only can be justified thereby; for our author himself will allow, that none can be justified by the righteousness of Christ who do not rest their hope of justification before God wholly thereupon, but imagine, that something else is necessary to their acceptance with God.

We might further add, that on this supposition there can be no occasion for any imputed righteousness: —— for if men must be conscious of their own sinfulness, labour of charity and self-denied obedience, before they can see their title clear to the benefit of it, or, which is the same thing, have any warrant to appropriate and *confide in it*, they need not be beholden to it at all, nor have they the least occasion for it, if we may credit *Palamon* who asserts with great confidence, “ That the Scripture “ itself will warrant any man to hope for acceptance with God who is influenced by all those “ good dispositions toward the law,” which doubtless must be found with every one who loves God and keeps his commandments, is freed from the

* It must be acknowledged, that there is a manifest impropriety in this way of speaking; but this is owing to the inconsistency of our author's sentiments with regard to this subject: for he maintains, that a relying wholly on the imputed righteousness is necessary to justification; and yet plainly insinuates, that no man can with safety *crystallize* in that righteousness, so as to rest any *personal* hope of salvation therepon, or be assured that ever he shall have any benefit thereby, till his faith has for some time wrought in the way of *painful desire and fear*, or in acts of *charity and self-denied obedience*.

service of sin, and led to work righteousness*. Such an one may live well enough by his own obedience: for our author tells us, God himself hath set his oath to it, that he shall be happy, however imperfect his obedience may be, if it be but sincere.

Thus, according to our author, the dispositions made necessary to clear and ascertain our title to the benefit of the imputed righteousness, or to the forgiveness of sins and eternal happiness purchased by Christ, "are sufficient to make us live without " him, and to supersede the necessity of Christ, "or any atonement at all."

From what has been said it is easy to see, that our author's scheme is *felo de se*, effectually destroys itself; and that it has really fallen under the curse denounced against murderers, false accusers, and slanderers, in the following words: *The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow — to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter their own heart, &c. ¶* Thus unsuccessful will all the weapons be that are formed against ZION, or any part of divine truth ¶ All enemies and opposers of the truth, with all the engines formed against the same, first or last, will work their own ruin.

Though *Palæmon*, following the example of his old friends the votaries of the *Romish* church, labours hard to prove, that there may be justifying faith, yea a full assurance of faith, without any assurance of hope, the least degree of assurance, or confidence in the divine mercy, or in the righteousness of Christ, set forth in the gospel as the only ground of a sinner's justification before God; yet, constrained we may suppose by the evidence of truth,

* Letters, p. 88. 89.

+ Psalm xxxvii. 14, 15.

¶ Mai. liv. 17.

which

which sometimes is a thing too stubborn to be refuted, he makes such concessions as do serve effectually to refute his own opinion, and are sufficient to discover the folly and absurdity of all his reasonings on this subject. He grants, "That if a testimony
 " persuades one of the reality of excellent things,
 " utterly unknown to him before, and assures him
 " of good things to come; this persuasion or faith
 " may justly be called, *the substance of things hoped
 for, the evidence of things not seen*; and that it
 " may be called the *λόγος*, the argument, evidence,
 " proof, or conviction of invisible things; and
 " the *ὑποστάσις*, the substantial ground, or solid foun-
 " dation of hope." He further allows, "that the
 " faith of the gospel is indeed the *basis* of trust,
 " courage, confidence, boasting, and glorying;"—
 and "that so soon as men believe the truth, *hope* is
 " the benefit they receive by it *."

Now, if the testimony of God in the gospel assures us of good things to come, or of eternal salvation as the gift of God to sinners through Jesus Christ, and thus lays a solid foundation for hope, it is evident, that a firm belief of that testimony must imply an assurance of salvation, or as the letter-writer is pleased to express it, of good things to come. And if so soon as men belief the truth, hope; such a hope as is built upon a solid foundation, a well-grounded hope of good things to come, or, which I take to be the same thing, of everlasting happiness in the other world, is the benefit they receive thereby; it must doubtless be granted, that the testimony of God in the gospel —— lays a solid foundation for an assured hope of salvation; yea, that as far as that testimony is believed, there must be such a hope.

* Letters, p. 374.

This is the very truth, and the substance of what *Palæmon* styles the popular doctrine on this head: and, what is still more surprising, it is that very doctrine which all his strange assertions and reasonings about the assurance of hope, as what arises only from the experience of them that love God and keep his commandments, are intended to refute and overthrow. At one time he grants, that hope, a well-grounded, and therefore, doubtless, an assured hope of good things to come, is the immediate fruit and inseparable concomitant of justifying faith: at another time he plainly insinuates, that it is so far from being a necessary fruit or constant attendant of true faith, that it is only to be obtained after the believer has been for some time engaged in the work and labour of love, and a tedious and painful course of self-denied obedience*: that this, and this alone, ascertains his title to the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, and consequently to the whole benefit of the divine righteousness.

Had *Palæmon* intended to act a fair and honest part, instead of taking such an indirect method to instil his *Papish* notions into the minds of his readers, he would have told us plainly, that the doctrine of imputed righteousness is a mere dream; and that no man has ground to believe that he is, or can ever be justified by faith only, without the works of the law; for in this point the *Romanists* and he are fully agreed: and it is evident, that with regard to almost every other article of the Christian faith, his notions are much more unscriptural and dangerous than theirs.

The letter-writer has the confidence to insinuate, that the martyrs who suffered soon after the

* Letters, p. 419.

† P. 398, 399.

dawning

dawning of the Reformation, for bearing testimony to the truth in opposition to the errors and abominations of the Romish church, were chargeable with a great mistake in supposing, that *assurance*, or, which comes to much the same thing, a *particular trust* in the mercy of God through Christ, as revealed in the promises of the gospel, is in the nature of justifying and saving faith. This he imputes to a defect of judgment and great inadvertency; to their not rightly distinguishing between the scriptural account of the nature of justifying faith and what they felt in their own experience, while engaged in a course of suffering for Christ. But though it should be granted, that some of the weaker sort among them might sometimes be ready to form a judgment concerning the nature of faith, more from their own experience and extraordinary attainments, than from the account given thereof in the Inspired Writings, or a serious consideration of the grounds of it there set down, it would be very unjust to charge the whole body of them with any mistaken notions of this kind. For as they all agreed in maintaining, that the promises of the gospel directed to sinners of mankind lay a solid foundation for the full assurance of faith, or an assurance of justification and salvation through the righteousness of Christ; and that a *particular application* or *appropriation* of Christ and the benefits of redemption — with a *particular trust* in the mercy of God through Christ, belong to, and are included in the very nature of justifying faith; so many learned and judicious divines in that period have by unexceptionable arguments drawn from the Sacred Writings proved both these points: yea, such as have any tolerable acquaintance with their writings, will easily perceive, that the hinge of the contro-

verly between them and their *Popish* adversaries, did chiefly turn upon them.

Had our *Protestant* ancestors once yielded, that justifying faith is only a *general assent* to the truths of the gospel, or, as our author terms it, the simple belief of the bare truth, without any *fiducial application* of the merits of Christ and mercy of God; or that men may have true faith, yea a full assurance of faith, and yet remain altogether doubtful and uncertain about their own salvation, or, as *Palæmon* loves to speak, “entirely at the mercy of God for salvation *,” it is evident, that they would have given up the whole cause to their adversaries; who did not care what they ascribed to faith, or to the righteousness of Christ, provided it might be allowed, that something else, such as, charity and good works, or the work and labour of love appearing in a course of self-denied obedience, is necessary to lay a solid foundation for a *particular trust* in the mercy of God, or a confident and assured hope of eternal salvation through Christ. Had this, which is the very sentiment *Palæmon* is at so much pains to support in the *Postscript* to his fifth, and in his sixth letter, only been granted, the advocates for the *Popish* doctrine on this head, would not have differed greatly with *Protestant* divines about any high encomiums they might pass on the righteousness of Christ, or the sovereignty of divine grace appearing in the justification of the guilty through his merits.

We might further observe here, that the author of the letters, after his usual manner, greatly misrepresents the sentiments of the *martyrs* and those eminent divines who lived in the most early period of Reformation, while he insinuates, that they held

* Letters, p. 345.

that

that assurance of one's being a friend of Christ, or of a change of his state, and the reality of a work of grace in his soul, is in the nature of faith*: for the assurance they speak of, as being essential to true justifying faith, is an assurance that is wholly bottomed upon the *free promise* of life and salvation through Jesus Christ addressed to the chief of sinners, and neither more nor less on the knowledge or feeling of any internal change wrought upon their hearts. According to them, when sinners believe the promise, *in believing*, they are, in proportion to the measure of their faith, assured of the remission of their sins and of eternal salvation by Jesus Christ, without knowing any thing further about *their state*, than that they are by nature *children of wrath and heirs of hell*, under the curse of an angry and sin-revenging God; or, in one word, that they are sinners in such a dangerous, destitute and deplorable condition, as to stand in absolute need of a Saviour.

This is what those eminent preachers + against whom our author's zeal, such as it is, is chiefly inflamed, did still teach and inculcate; yet so disingenuous is this writer, that, when attempting to throw an *odium* upon their doctrine concerning the assurance of faith — he still endeavours to persuade his readers, that they make this to consist in a good opinion of a man's own state, founded on some good qualifications about himself whereby he apprehends he is distinguished from the rest of man-kind, and furnished with some peculiar claim to the divine favour or mercy; whereas they teach quite the reverse, namely, that the assurance of faith is so

* Letters, p. 398. + Mr. Marshall, Boston, Erskine and Harvey.

far from being founded on any supposed change of one's own state or good qualifications about himself; that if it is built on any thing of that kind, and not wholly on the *gracious promise* of a God in Christ, published in the gospel for the benefit of guilty perishing sinners, and directed to all such without exception or distinction, it is not true faith, but vain presumption. This is so evident from the general scope and strain of the writings and sermons published by those excellent men, that no intelligent and unprejudiced reader, who has perused them with any suitable attention, can call it in question.

For proof of this we need only appeal to those very passages which the letter-writer has quoted* from a sermon preached by the worthy *Ebenezer Erskine*, from *Luke* ii. 28. intitled *Christ in the believer's arms*, on purpose to shew that this eminent preacher maintained, that the assurance which he, with many other famous Protestant divines, affirms to be essential to faith, is nothing else but an assurance concerning one's own personal state; or a being assured, that he is in a state of grace: for in those very words which the letter-writer takes notice of, as no doubt thinking them most liable to exception, or what might be most easily wrested to serve his purpose, Mr. Erskine plainly asserts the very contrary, namely, that justifying faith is a persuasion, or belief, that God makes an offer of a crucified and slain Saviour to the sinner himself in particular, accompanied with an *actual receiving* and *embracing* of Christ, as thus freely offered in the gospel; and he justly observes, that in doing so the sinner has ground to conclude, that he was elected,

* Letters, p. 350.

and

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and that Christ died for him in particular * : and certainly none can doubt of this who hold with the apostle, that none believe on Christ in time, but those who were *ordained to eternal life* † ; and that Christ died for all true believers, or laid down his life for the sheep ‡ .

This knowledge of a man's particular election, or an assurance that Christ died for him in particular, Mr. Erskine does not affirm to be essential to justifying faith, or indeed inseparable from it. He only asserts, that it either is or may be attained by every one who truly believes on Christ for salvation. The appropriating act he speaks of, as inseparably attending that knowledge and assent to the truths of the gospel which belong to the nature of faith, is not to be understood as importing the conclusion mentioned in the last clause of the foregoing sentence ; but as denoting the same thing with that taking and embracing of Christ freely offered in the gospel, he had formerly spoken of, as warranting such a conclusion. Upon the whole, it is evi-

* Mr. Erskine's words are these ; " — I do not say, that the first language of faith is, that Christ died for me, or I was elected from eternity. No. But the language of faith is, God offers a slain and crucified Saviour to me, and I take the slain Christ for my Saviour ; and in my taking or embracing of him as offered, I have ground to conclude, that I was elected, and that he died for me in particular, and not before. I shall only add, that this appropriating act doth inseparably attend the knowledge and assent before-mentioned ; and that they are all jointly comprised in the general nature of saving faith ; which I take up as an act of the whole soul, without restricting it to any one faculty, or distinction as to priority or posteriority of time."

† Acts xiii. 48. ‡ John x. 15.

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dent, that the assurance or appropriation he speaks of, are, according to his doctrine, to be founded wholly upon the *free promise* and offer of the gospel addressed to sinners of mankind in general; and this is very agreeable to, yea comprises the sum of the old *Protestant* doctrine concerning faith and justification.

That this is indeed the sentiment which Mr. Erskine intended to establish in the passage above-mentioned, will further appear, if we consult his own words in another passage of the same sermon quoted by our author, which are as follow: "Christ is offered particularly to every man: there is not a soul hearing me, but, in God's name, I offer Christ unto him as if called by name and surname. Beware, my friends, of a general, doubt-some faith, abjured in our *national covenant*, as a branch of Popery. A general persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save all that come to him, will not do the business: no; devils and reprobates may, and do actually believe it. There must therefore of necessity be a persuasion and belief of this, with particular application thereof unto a man's own soul."

On this passage the letter-writer makes the following remark. "The doubt-some faith he complains of, is that which admits of a doubt concerning one's own state." But how does this appear? I should have thought, that the quite contrary is evident from the scope and tenor

of

* Letters, p. 334. As it is the *Papists* general doubt-some faith Mr. Erskine here condemns as insufficient to justification, our author by censuring him on this account leaves us at full liberty to conclude, that the *Papists* and he are agreed as to the nature of justifying faith: and

of Mr. Erskine's discourse; namely, that the faith and assurance he speaks of, include no other consideration of the man's own state, than that he is a guilty condemned sinner standing in absolute need of a Saviour; but are entirely bottomed upon the free offer and faithful promise of a God in Christ, which the man believes with particular application to himself, so as to rest his hope of justification and salvation wholly upon it, being fully assured that in doing so he shall be safe.

What is condemned by Mr. Erskine in the passage above-quoted, then, is not any doubt about a man's own state, but a doubting of the faithfulness of a God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lie, and who declares and testifies in the gospel, That eternal life is his gift to hell-deserving sinners, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But as the heart is deceitful above all things, and men are in great hazard of mistaking a strong fancy and groundless imagination for saving faith, there is still need for the exercise of self-examination. Yet, though this is a duty incumbent upon, and of great advantage to the most confirmed believers, it will not follow, that it is their duty also to doubt of their salvation: no; though they often do so, this is not their duty, but their sin, and flows from those remainders of unbelief and spiritual darkness that are still to be found with them. Our Lord plainly intimates, that a full assurance of faith would be an effectual antidote against all inward trouble, anxiety, and perplexity of mind, when he says, *Let not your heart be troubled;*

and hence it is plain, that they cannot differ greatly in their sentiments concerning justification. Yea, it were easy to make it appear, that with regard to this matter he falls very far short of many of them in point of orthodoxy.

ye believe in God, believe also in me. Hence it necessarily follows, that the lively exercise and full assurance of faith must exclude all fear and doubting.

Our author, I presume, will allow, that justifying faith does at least imply in it a general belief or persuasion of Christ's ability and willingness to save sinners, even the most guilty and unworthy. And it is equally certain, that unless men believe this with particular application to themselves, they do not believe it at all; do not believe, that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save ALL who come to him, though he himself declares, in express terms, that he is so, when he says, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*

While a sinner is altogether insensible of his guilt and misery, and consequently of his need of righteousness and salvation by Christ, he can never understand, nor duly advert to the meaning of the divine testimony concerning the same, but must always take it to be something else than it really is; and so instead of giving credit to it, only admit some false imagination in its room. And supposing, that he has a deep sense of his own guilt and sinfulness, if he apprehends he has no warrant to expect salvation from Christ, till he is possessed of some personal righteousness or good qualifications, it is evident he cannot be said to believe what the gospel declares concerning Christ; namely, that *whosoever believeth on him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life*; and that he will not reject or cast out any that come to him, let them be ever so guilty and unworthy.

Hence it is evident, that a general faith of the gospel, when there is no more, is properly *no faith at all*; and that it is rather a faith which men profess to have, than what they really are possessed of.

Mr.

Mr. Erskine therefore had good reason to exhort his hearers to beware of a *Popish*, general doubtsome faith: which, though a faith of the same nature with *Palamon's*, is really no faith at all; but may be called a kind of unmeaning, as well as naked assent to the truths of the gospel: for when one has no other faith but that, and yet pretends to believe on Christ, it may justly be said, that he believes he knows not what: he is ignorant of the nature, end and design of the gospel; ignorant of the true intent and meaning of all that is revealed concerning Christ therein: he knows not *the truth as it is in Jesus*; and therefore does not rightly understand, nor truly believe, any thing that the gospel testifies concerning the way of salvation;—though it is evidently the main scope of the gospel; of all the histories, doctrines, calls, invitations, and promises belonging thereto; to direct sinners how they may obtain salvation, or become possessed of everlasting happiness.

The author of the letters has taken no small pains to prove, that a *fiducial recumbency* on the mercy of God in Christ*, expressed in Scripture by trusting, relying, &c. belongs not to the nature of justifying faith; and that the *assurance of hope*, by which doubtless we are to understand any certain or well-grounded hope of salvation, is not founded on the testimony or promise of God in the gospel, but on

* *Bellarmino* calls this *fiducia specialis misericordiae*, the faith of special mercy, and denies that it is in the nature of justifying faith, or that there is any foundation for it in the gospel. According to him it is acquired by the believer's own charity and good works. The *assurance of hope* *Palamon* speaks of, is at bottom the very same thing; and he tells us it is obtained in the very same manner, namely, by the *self-denied labour of clarity*.

experience in the hearts of them that believe; which presupposes the *work* and *labour of love*, and is so far from being an immediate fruit or inseparable attendant of true faith, that it is not attained till the believer has been for some time, and perhaps for a long time, exercised in the *self-denied labour of charity*: yet he grants, that the confidence and hope aforesaid do immediately follow upon, or necessarily accompany a firm persuasion of the truth of the gospel; for he acknowledges, “that this persuasion may be called the substantial ground or solid foundation of hope;” and “that so soon as men believe the truth, hope is the benefit they receive by it.” But according to the former hypothesis, a man must be some time, none knows how long, engaged in a course of self-denied obedience, before he can have any solid foundation upon which he may with safety bottom his confidence in the mercy of God, and hope of salvation*. According to the latter,

* Here it may not be improper to observe, that though *faith* and *hope*, with that confidence and assurance which are necessarily implied in both, are primarily, and indeed solely, founded on the *free promises* of the gospel addressed to sinners of mankind, yet they are *nourished* and *strengthened* in the diligent use of appointed means, and by a constant and close walking with God in the practice of universal holiness, and all the duties of obedience which God requires of his people. In this manner *faith* and *hope*, which at first perhaps were very weak and accompanied with many doubts and fears, sometimes grow up to a full assurance.

Thus, after the apostle had commended the believing *Hebrews* for their work and labour of love, which they showed toward the name of the Lord, particularly, in ministering to the saints, he exhorts them to *shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end*, Heb. vi. 11.

Those

latter, the testimony of God in the gospel is the immediate foundation of both. How shall we reconcile such different and contradictory sentiments?

But

These words do not import, as the *Papists* and *Palæon* would make us believe, that the assurance of hope is acquired by, or does only arise from the work and labour of love, and that experience in the hearts of them who believe, that is consequential thereto; but only intimate, that the best method they could take for getting their faith and hope, which perhaps at present were weak and languid, strengthened and confirmed, so that they might at length grow up to a full assurance, was to exercise themselves in the study and practice of holiness, particularly in those acts of charity and self-denied obedience, which being accounted indifferent by many professors of religion, would in an especial manner testify their love to the Lord Jesus, and a disinterested concern for his honour.

That a faithful and diligent performance of these duties is a notable means for strengthening and confirming the faith of believers, is evident from what the apostle observes elsewhere: for he tells us, That *they who have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. iii. 13.

Besides, it may be observed, that the words, *μηδὲ τὸν ἀπαργεῖν τὸν διάδοτον*, may be rendered *with*, or, according to the full assurance of hope. According to this interpretation of the words, which is far from being forced or unnatural, the apostle exhorts the believing *Hebreus* to shew unwearied diligence in the practice of holiness, works of charity and self-denied obedience; and at the same time, the full assurance of hope, or a firm expectation of future happiness, founded on the free and faithful promise of a gracious God in Christ; whence they might be assured, that their labour would not be in vain in the Lord. Or, the apostle mentions the full assurance of hope, an assured hope of immortal glory.

But inconsistencies of this kind are so frequently to be met with in the *letters on THERON*, &c. that it would be endless to take particular notice of them all. In short, there is scarce any one point treated of in that performance, with regard to which the author does not shamefully contradict himself, and effectually overthrow his own hypothesis; though by a multiplicity of words, susceptible of various and often contrary senses, and a deal of unmeaning sophistry, he has found means to conceal his inconsistencies in a great measure, from weak and inattentive readers.

It must certainly argue very great presumption, and a manifest disregard of what the Scripture teaches, for any to affirm, that *trusting* in the mercy and promise of God through Christ, does not belong to the nature of saving faith; when *this* in the Inspired Writings is most frequently expressed by *trusting in*

as a most powerful inducement and strong encouragement to diligence and constancy in the work and labour of love. This he does elsewhere in the same epistle, when he says, *We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. xii. 28. The same thing is intimated in a similar exhortation addressed to the believing Corinthians by the same apostle: *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, who hath given us the assured hope of complete deliverance from sin, death, and all enemies, and of a happy immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, adds he, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. If any should question whether the Greek preposition *μετά* may fully, or upon good authority, be rendered in the manner above expressed, they may consult John i. 1. Gal. i. 18. Ephes. vi. 12. Luke xiii. 47.

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the Lord, hoping, or putting confidence, in his mercy ; and faith, trust, and confidence in God, are commonly used to denote one and the same thing. Besides, there are many places where the word *faith*, or *believing*, will admit of no other signification *. *Unbelief* in the Sacred Writings is said to be a *departing of the heart from the living God* † ; and consequently *faith* must be the cleaving of the heart to him, by a particular trust or *fiducial recumbence* on his mercy and promise : and the Scripture will support us in affirming, that all in whom it is wanting, let them have ever so just notions of the person and work of Christ, are under the curse of God ‡, or in a state of condemnation, and so cannot be justified. Yet *Palemon*, in this taking part with *Bellarmino* and other *Papists*, will have it, that confidence in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ does not go before but follow justification, and at a great distance too ; after the believer has for some time been exercised in works charity and self-denied obedience ||. Thus, according

* Matt. xiv. 31. chap. xv. 28. and chap. xvii. 20.
Mark. xi. 22, 23, 24. John xiv. 1. Jam. i. 6. &c.

† Heb. iii. 12. ‡ Jerom. xvii. 5.

|| *Fides justificans procedere debet justificationem. Fides autem specialis misericordiae sequitur justificationem. Igittu fides specialis misericordiae non est fides justificans. Fiducia qua quis confidit sibi esse remissa peccata pendat a bona conscientia ac prouide pre-exigit justificationem, non illam efficit.* Bellarmin. Let the reader compare with those assertions of *Bellarmino* some of a like nature that we meet with in the letters on *Tberon*, &c. Such as these, “ No man can enjoy that life which lies in God’s favour, further than he loves God and keeps his commandments ; no man can be assured that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness ;” with many others of a like import ; and it will

ing to them, one whom the word of God pronounces accursed, may be a true believer and justified person.

The letter-writer supposes, that one may love God and keep his commandments who never trusted in him, nor had ground to expect any blessing from ; but if we consult the Sacred Oracles, we shall find, that a *particular trust* in the mercy of God through Christ, is the source of all true love and obedience to God *. Without a fiducial persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, any obedience men may pretend to yield to the law of God, can only be *slavish* and *mercenary* ; as it must still be performed with a view to recommend themselves to the divine favour and mercy, or to lay a foundation for some peculiar claim to the benefit of the divine righteousness, and that assurance of hope which, according to *Palæmon*, arises only from experience in the hearts of them who love God and keep his commandments. Thus, instead of faith, which is a receiving of the gift of righteousness, and the several benefits which accompany and are given freely along with it, the sinner's own righteousness and obedience are made the means of applying, and interesting him in Christ and the blessings of the gospel. According to this notion, the divine righteousness and salvation, which as the Scripture affirms, and the letter-writer himself acknowledges †, are brought near to the guilty, are indeed set at such a distance from them, as to ly quite beyond their reach ; none having a warrant to claim the benefit will be found, that though there is some difference in the manner of expression, their sentiments in relation to this point do exactly coincide.

* 1 John iv. 19. compared with chap. v. 3. John xv. 5. Psal. lxxi. 16. &c.

† Letters, p. 88. of

of them, but those who are first conscious of their love to God, and their sincere and self-denied obedience to his commandments.

It must require a strong faith to believe, with *Palamon*, that all who are justified, are justified by faith *only*, without the works of the law; without respect to any good disposition or qualification whatsoever in themselves; and yet maintain, at the same time, that no man has ground to think, that he either is or can be justified and saved, but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness*. It is not easy to conceive what this writer could intend by troubling the world with such a *farrago* † of crude, senseless and contradictory notions, as he has thrown together on this subject. One thing seems evident, namely, that one who writes in such a loose and rambling manner, and so inconsistently on any subject, cannot be supposed to understand what he says or whereof he affirms; and if he does not, it is not to be thought that any body else can. Yet it is not unusual for an author to be so blinded with pride, self-conceit and other disorderly passions, as to be incapable of per-

* It is granted, that freedom from sin, from its reigning power and dominion, and works of righteousness and obedience to the law of God, are to be found with every true believer, and are necessary to evidence the truth of his faith, or to shew that it is of the right kind; and that he is in a justified state; yet those, with a consciousness of them, are not *prior* but *posterior* to the faith of pardon and salvation through the righteousness and blood of Christ; this being really the first act of the new creature, and the principle of all acceptable obedience to the law of God, *John xi. 25, 26. Heb. xi. 6.*

† A confused jumble of many different things put together without any order or connection.

ceiving those absurdities which another, though of inferior abilities, may readily espy, and easily detect.

Before I leave this head I shall only observe, that when *Palæmon* makes the knowledge and consciousness of one's own love to God and obedience to his commandments, the foundation of a *particular trust* in the mercy of God, through Christ for salvation, which at bottom is the same thing with what he calls the *assurance of hope*, he is really chargeable with asserting, in a manner easy to be understood, what, without the least colour of truth, he imputes to his antagonists as a capital error whereby they have attempted to pervert and overthrow the true doctrine of the grace of God, namely, that men must be possessed of such and such good qualifications in order to furnish them with some peculiar, or indeed any profitable claim to the mercy of God, or the benefit of the divine righteousness; or, to use his own phrase, that a preliminary human one is some way expedient or rather necessary to our enjoying the benefit and comfort of it.

The preachers whom he chiefly opposes, agreeably to Scripture and the apostolic doctrine, maintained, that the gift of righteousness, with the several benefits which accompany the same, brought near to sinners in the gospel, must be RECEIVED before any can actually enjoy the benefit and comfort of them: and indeed it seems impossible to conceive how one can be possessed of a gift any otherwise than by receiving it. But our author plainly insinuates, nay, confidently asserts, that till men love God, and have been for some time engaged in performing acts of self-denied obedience to his commandments, they have no warrant to receive, or make particular application of the gift of righteousness and salvation, and consequently

sequently cannot enjoy the benefit or comfort thereof.

And as the letter-writer has done what he could to cut off all unbelieving sinners from having any claim to the benefit of the divine righteousness, he has also used his endeavours to deprive believers of any comfort or special privileges they are already possessed of, by virtue of the same, or in consequence of their believing on the name of the Son of God; as will appear from a due consideration of the sentiments expressed in the following article.

ARTICLE XVI.

*THE sins of believers do not only make them liable to some fatherly chastisements in this life, but expose them to the curse of the divine law, and the wrath to come; yea render them no less obnoxious to both than the sins of other men, who are yet in an unjustified state, do them: and every one who maintains the contrary, or that believers, being already in a justified state, are no more liable to condemnation, is ignorant both of the gospel and of the true God.**

REMARKS.

IF what *Palamon* has asserted in relation to this point is admitted, any controversy about justification or justifying faith, must be acknowledged to be of very little moment: for according to his

* Letters, p. 419.

view of the matter, it must be extremely difficult, yea altogether impossible to conceive what benefit can be received by either. If the sins of believers and men in a justified state do no less expose them to condemnation, and the curse of the divine law, than the sins of others do them, we may very well put the question, What advantage has the believer above the unbeliever? Or, what profit is there in justification? What benefit can any one receive by it? Every sin a believer commits is supposed to make him obnoxious to the curse of the divine law, and the wrath to come; and the sins of unbelievers can do no more.

It would be to no purpose to alledge, that the believer is secured from condemnation on account of sins already committed, though he is still in hazard of falling under the curse for the sins he may afterwards commit: for as the Scripture nowhere gives us any ground to suppose, that God justifies any in this manner imperfectly and by halves, it is easy to perceive that a *justification* of this kind could be of no advantage to believers, unless they were perfectly sanctified too, and able to keep the commandments of God perfectly.

The letter-writer affects to shew such an uncommon zeal for the article of justification through imputed righteousness, that he charges his opponents with intolerable presumption, impiety, and atheism *, only on account of some expressions in their writings, which he pretends have a tendency to corrupt and pervert it; but if, as he alleges, believers after justification are no less liable to condemnation and the wrath of God, than they were before; it is evident, that there can be no such thing as any imputed righteousness, or at least that

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there is no imputation of the divine righteousness to any in this mortal state, that can be of the least advantage to them. If such a corruption of the doctrine of justification as he charges upon his antagonists is fatal and damnable, as he frequently intimates in his letters, then certainly a total perversion and denial thereof can be no less so : yet it must appear evident to every intelligent reader, that his hypothesis concerning a believer's liability to the curse and wrath of God does really amount to this ; for according to his doctrine on this head, it is altogether impossible for any to enjoy the benefit of the imputed righteousness, unless they yield perfect obedience to the divine law, which it is acknowledged none can do in this life. To affirm that the benefit of that righteousness depends wholly on an impossible condition ; such as that of perfect holiness and obedience to the law of God, is much the same thing as to maintain, that there neither is, nor can be, any imputation thereof to a sinner for his justification : for why should it ? How can it be imputed to those who cannot possibly receive any benefit by it ?

Palamon might therefore very well have spared his invectives against the popular preachers, for some supposed corruptions of the doctrine of justification ; since it is evident, that the censures he has thought fit to pass upon them, must fall equally heavy, yea far heavier upon himself, who has not only corrupted that doctrine, but done what he could to overthrow it altogether.

We formerly had occasion to observe, that *Palamon*, notwithstanding all his high, swelling words of vanity concerning the *atonement*, and the righteousness or work of Christ finished upon the cross, as being the sole requisite to justification, does, by what he teaches with regard to the foun-

dation of a sinner's claim to any special benefit resulting from the righteousness and death of Christ, does in effect make love to God, with sincere and self-denied obedience to his law, the condition both of justification and salvation. But when he affirms, that believers are no less liable to the curse of the divine law, and the wrath to come, than others, he goes a step farther, and does really upon the matter maintain, that, even with respect to believers already in a justified state, perfect obedience to the law of God is as much the condition of everlasting happiness, as it was to *Adam* in the state of innocence : for if after all the benefit they are supposed to receive by their justification and the imputation of the divine righteousness, they are as liable to wrath and condemnation for every sin they commit, as they were before ; it is plain, that unless they *persevere* in yielding such obedience to the divine law as is without the least flaw or defect, they can have no sure or just title to eternal happiness ; no title to it more than unbelievers ; or, in other words, they cannot be saved.

If it should be said, that though the sins of believers after justification do still make them liable to condemnation ; yet the interest they have in the righteousness of Christ does effectually prevent the execution of the condemning sentence of the law with respect to them, we may ask, Whether God has made any special promise to believers, assuring them, that though their sins do in their own nature deserve condemnation and everlasting wrath, as well as the sins of others, yet the wrath threatened in the law shall never actually be executed upon them ? If he has done so, then we may warrantably affirm, that by an act of justification already passed in their favour, and intimated

to

to their consciences, and by the promise of God, they are infallibly secured from the wrath to come, or everlasting condemnation ; and how one can in this manner be effectually secured from the wrath to come, and yet still be liable to it, is not easy to conceive.

If there is any such thing as justification, it must certainly import freedom from the guilt of sin, and the curse of the divine law. Now, as it would be a manifest contradiction to say, that one is delivered from the curse and under it, at the same time ; if a believer should at any time fall under the curse of the divine law, as according to *Palamon's* hypothesis he may and must do, every time he commits, or is found chargeable with any sin, it must be either because the righteousness of Christ imputed to him is *insufficient* for his justification, or because it *ceases* to be imputed to him any more. It is scarce to be supposed, that the letter-writer will have the confidence to assert the former, after he has so often affirmed that the righteousness of Christ is all-sufficient to justification ; he must therefore grant the latter, namely, that as soon as a believer commits any sin, the righteousness of Christ ceases to be imputed to him any more ; or that he loses any interest he formerly had in the imputed righteousness, and consequently the whole benefit of his justification.

If this was really the case, one might be in a state of justification to day, and in a state of condemnation to morrow ; a child of God and an heir of glory one day ; a child of the devil and heir of hell the next : which is as gross as any thing that ever was taught by *Papists* or *Pelagians*. If we should admit this notion, we could not affirm with the apostle, *That the gifts and calling of God*

*God are without repentance**; but would find it necessary to allow, that all the special and distinguishing gifts that ever were bestowed upon believers, with the grant of the several privileges which in justification they are intitled to, not only may be, but are actually recalled a thousand times, yea, every time the believer commits any sin.

If, with the author of the letters, we maintain, that a believer, notwithstanding his justification, and special interest in the righteousness, death, and resurrection of Christ, is not secured from future condemnation, but as liable to it as he was before; it will be very difficult to account for that confidence and triumph of faith expressed by the apostle, when he says, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* *It is God that justifieth:* *Who is he that condemneth?* *It is Christ that died,* &c †. For, according to our author, notwithstanding all that Christ has done and suffered for believers and their special interest therein, whatever was or could be laid to the charge of any as a ground of condemnation, may be laid to their charge also. Nothing can be a ground of condemnation, but sin: and that may and must be laid to their charge, if they are thereby rendered obnoxious to the curse of the divine law and the wrath to come.

It will readily be granted, I think, that none are justified till they believe the gospel, or are possessed of saving faith; and it is no less evident, that all who truly believe the gospel are such as Christ acknowledges for his sheep. Now, concerning his sheep, he says, *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish* ‡. In direct contradiction to this, the letter-writer plainly insinuates, that as they have no sure title to everlasting life

* Rom. xi. 29. † Rom. viii. 33, 34. ‡ John x. 28.
founded

founded on their union with Christ and the imputation of his righteousness, they are no more secured from perishing than any other sinners: for, according to his wild hypothesis, they may altogether lose the benefit of their justification, and any interest they formerly had in the several blessings and privileges connected therewith, or consequential thereto: and upon supposition of their doing so, they must also lose their interest in all the promises peculiar to believers and justified persons, and consequently their interest in the promise above-mentioned among the rest*. In a word,

* The letter-writer, particularly when speaking on this subject, has given some broad hints from which it evidently appears, that he looks upon what all sound Protestant divines have hitherto, agreeably to the Scripture, taught concerning the perseverance of the saints, as a popular absurdity. He tells us indeed, p. 419, 420, that believers are kept from falling away by the fear of falling away: but as this is no more than Papists and Pelagians will grant; so from his ridiculing what he calls the popular doctrine concerning the perseverance of the saints, it appears he has adopted the Popish notion concerning the possibility of a believer's falling totally from a state of grace. This notion is so evidently unscriptural and absurd, that it is surprising any who profess to have the least regard for the inspired writings, should have the effrontery to contend for it.

Here I shall take the liberty to transcribe a passage from the writings of an eminent divine, who, though a judicious and valuable preacher, was not, if I am rightly informed, in his time, accounted a very popular preacher. When speaking of what is taught by those who maintain, that believers may, and do frequently fall from a state of grace, that great divine expresses himself in the following manner.

word, they may be, and by every sin they commit, really are brought into the same deplorable and hazardous condition that any of the rest of mankind

" *That doctrine* sets God at great uncertainties as to
" the object of his love. If a renewed man be dis-
" carded from God's favour, and lose the habit of
" grace because he commits a sin which deserves death,
" he would upon every sin be cashiered, because every
" sin deserves death by the rigour of the law, Rom.
" vi. 23. And the whole life of a Christian would be
" nothing else but an interchange of friend and enemy,
" son and no son.—According to this doctrine, there
" would be so many blottings out, and so many writings
" again of their names in the book of life every
" day. A man may be in their sense in God's favour,
" and out of it many times in a day, one moment in a
" state of salvation, the next in a state of damnation;
" and so run in a circle from salvation to damnation all
" the year long. Is this uncertainty like the stability
" of mountains and hills, a greater than which God
" promises? Isa. liv. 10. *The mountains shall depart,*
" *and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not de-*
" *part from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace*
" *be removed, saith the Lord that bath mercy on thee.*
" God provided such a covenant of peace that might
" not be removed, that he might not be at such con-
" stant removes in his kindness as these men would
" make him. Is it not unworthy to make such a repre-
" sentation of the all-wise and immutable God, as if
" he were daily carefless his creatures, and daily re-
" penting of those gifts of effectual calling, which the
" Scripture asserts to be without repentance? Rom.
" xi. 29. Repentance of any design is an effect of
" weakness of judgment as well as mutability of will.
" It doth rather set God at uncertainties, because
" it doth subject the grace of God to the will of man.
" It hangs the glory of God's grace in all the motions
" of it, and the efficacy of the promise upon the slip-
" " periness

kind can be supposed to be in. So that it can with as little propriety and certainty, be said of them, as of any others belonging to the human race,

" periness of man's will and affections. It makes the
 " omnipotent grace of God follow, not precede the
 " motions of man's will ; to be the lacquey not the
 " leader, either in converting or in preserving ; which
 " is at best to make the glory of his grace as volatile as
 " a feather, at the best sometimes up sometimes down ;
 " the soul this moment embraced by God with the
 " dearest affections, the next cast out as a vessel wherein
 " is no pleasure, and the succeeding moment admitted
 " to fresh communications ; this hour the temple of
 " the Holy Ghost, the next an habitation for dragons
 " and satyrs, the will of man giving one time the
 " key to the spirit, the next time to the devil; one
 " time as clean as a saint, another time as foul as a
 " fallen angel ; so that a christian's life would be spent
 " in nothing but ejections and repossessions between
 " God and the devil ; and the grace of God behoden
 " for its residence in the heart only to the humour of
 " the will. Is it reasonable thus to subject the fruits
 " of the great undertaking of Christ to the lottery of
 " fancy, and take the crown from the head of grace
 " to set upon the scalp of our corrupt will ?" *Cbarnock Discour.* vol. II. p. 742, 743.

Methinks *Palæmon* should have been better advised before he embraced, or attempted to vindicate an opinion so manifestly repugnant to the sacred writings, and that casts such dishonourable reflections upon all the divine perfections ; or ventured to ridicule a doctrine so well supported, as that of the final perseverance of all true believers. Will an impudent, ranting *scötary* attempt to overthrow that which is established in the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son, secured by all the promises made to believers, and ascertained by the purchase of Christ, their union with

race, that *they shall never perish*: because as we have shewed already, according to our author's hypothesis, they may lose all special interest in the divine righteousness, and it be no more imputed to them.

If it should be said, that the righteousness of Christ is still imputed to believers, and that they never lose their interest in it, then, according to any notion we can have of *imputation*, it must continue still to be placed to their account, for all the ends and purposes of justification and salvation, as really as if they had wrought it out in their own persons. And if so, we may as well suppose, that the law of God may condemn an innocent person, or one perfectly righteous, as imagine that a believer can fall under condemnation, or become obnoxious to the wrath of God, while the righteousness of Christ continues to be imputed to him, or placed to his account, as the *sole requisite* to justification.

It might tire the reader's patience, should we insist in shewing the inconsistency of what *Palæmon* asserts concerning the believer's liability to condemnation and the wrath to come, with the many plain declarations and testimonies we meet with in Scripture, ascertaining the great privilege of all believers and justified persons.

The spirit of God pronounces all such blessed, from this consideration, that the *Lord imputeth not iniquity to them**: the letter-writer in effect de-

Christ, the immutability of the love of God, the inhabitation of the divine spirit; and in fine, by all those dispensations of divine goodness toward them, whereby they are made meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light?

* Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. Rom. iv. 8.

nies,

nies, that they are a whit more blessed than others on this account : for according to him, every sin they commit after, as well as before justification, is imputed to them, so as to make them no less liable to the wrath and curse of God than other sinners. Our Lord affirms, that the believer *shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life* * : *Palæmon* maintains, that he *may* come into condemnation, and that he is still as liable to death and wrath as he was before. The apostle tells us, that *there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus* † : this Gentleman confidently affirms there is. There is not one *condemnation* ‡ to a believer in Christ, says *Paul*: there are many, says *Palæmon*; for every sin he commits lays him under a *new condemnation*. The Scripture says expressly, *The Lord will not cast off his people* § : our author insinuates he may. The Lord of hosts hath sworn, *that he will not be wroth with his people, whom he hath taken into covenant and communion with himself, nor rebuke them* ||, namely in a way of vindictive wrath : the letter-writer does more than insinuate, that no professor of the Christian faith can find any ground to think with the popular doctrine, that this is true **. But it would be endless to take particular notice of all the texts of Scripture, informing us of the happy state and great privileges of all true believers, which his opinion concerning their liableness to the curse of the divine law and the wrath to come, gives the lie to. I shall only observe here, that his sentiments on this head are directly repugnant to all that the Scripture teaches concerning the nature of justification, the privileges of the justified, the perseve-

* John v. 24. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ ὁὐδὲ κατακρίψαι.
§ Psal. xciv. 14. || Isa. liv. 9. ** Letters, p. 419.

rance of the saints, the unchangeableness of the love of God to his people, the stability and perpetuity of the covenant of grace, and the indissoluble union that takes place between Christ and all true believers.

It would really surprise one, that is unacquainted with the spirit and temper of the letter-writer, to find him, after all his pretensions of uncommon regard to the ancient gospel, directly impugning and contradicting the apostolic doctrine concerning the afflictions of the godly in this life, by insinuating, that they are part of the *curse*, and properly punishments for sin, inflicted on them in the way of vindictive anger. He censures the popular preachers for teaching, that the sins of believers do expose to some fatherly chastisements in this life only, and not to the curse of the divine law, and the wrath to come; and elsewhere he plainly insinuates, that Christ's people, even after their conversion and justification, suffer the punishment of *Adam's* sin, as well as other men*. Hence it is evident, that according to him all the losses, crosses, troubles, and afflictions, that befall the people of God in this world, are properly the *punishment* of sin, and part of the curse still executed upon them: but the apostle gives a quite different account of the matter when he calls the afflictions incident to believers in this life, the *CHASTENING* of the *Lord*; and plainly intimates, that, far from being the effects of his wrath, they flow from his love, and that tender affection he has for them as a father; and that they are all intended for, and will certainly issue in their profit, or yield unto them the *peaceable fruit of righteousness* †. Hence one would think it necessarily follows, that instead

* Letters, p. 27.

† Heb. xii. 5—11.

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of being part of the curse or punishment of sin, in a strict and proper sense, they really are blessings to them; because God thereby manifests his love, fatherly care, and compassion towards them, or, as the apostle expresses it, *dealeth with them as with sons**. We cannot then affirm, that God in afflicting his people, deals with them in a way of vindictive wrath, without flatly contradicting the apostle, and the testimony of the Spirit of God concerning the design, the nature, tendency, and happy issue, of all afflictions that believers are tried with in this world.

Punishment, when taken in a proper and strict sense, always supposes guilt: if therefore the people of God are at any time punished for their sins in the way of vindictive wrath, they must still be under the *guilt* of them: but if justification imports any thing, it must doubtless imply exemption from *guilt*; and therefore unless we can suppose that men may be condemned as guilty, and yet accounted righteous, or in other words, reputed guilty and not guilty at the same time; we cannot affirm with *Palæmon*, that the sins of a believer expose him to the curse of the divine law, and the wrath to come.. To affirm that a believer may be condemned and punished for his sin, or that he is liable to the execution of the law curse, is really to maintain, that one may be a believer, and yet not be justified, or, which is yet more absurd, that he may be justified and not justified at one and the same time. What wretched inconsistencies will not pride, opinionateness, and a malicious opposition to the truth, prompt men to run into?

• Heb. xii. 7.

The Scripture expressly affirms, that *Christ hath redeemed believers from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them* * : but according to *Palæmon's hypothesis* they are still obnoxious to it ; and every time they commit sin or suffer any affliction, are actually laid under it. The former he confidently affirms ; the latter he plainly insinuates. Is this the way to vindicate the ancient apostolic gospel ?—Who then can be said to pervert and contradict it ?

That afflictions in themselves are fruits of sin and of the curse, is readily granted ; but the Scripture makes it evident, that with regard to believers in Christ, the property of them is quite altered ; that is, they are so far sanctified and sweetened by the sufferings and cross of Christ, that there is not the least mixture of vindictive wrath in them † : and so far are they from being any part of the curse, that they really are blessings to the people of God. They belong to those *sure mercies of David* promised in the new covenant, whereof our Lord Jesus Christ the *antitypical David* is the mediator and surety ‡. God dispenses them to his people not in wrath, but in love : for *when the Lord loveth he chasteneth*. They are the discipline of his family, wherewith he exercises all his children, not for their hurt, but for their profit. They are laid upon them not by an angry and revenging judge, but by a gracious, loving, and compassionate father ; who thereby *bumbles, proves, and tries them, and purges away their dross* ; the dross of sin and corruption that still cleaves to them, as long as they are in this world ¶. Thus he makes

* Gal. iii. 13. † Heb. xii. 6. Exod. xv. 25.

‡ Isa. lv. 3. Acts xiii. 34. 1 Cor. iii. 22.

¶ Isa. i. 25. chap. xxvii. 9.

them

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them more and more meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. In a word, their afflictions are the chastening of a father, and never do, nor can exceed the limits of paternal correction: for the apostle plainly intimates, that however God may afflict his people, he still deals with them as with his sons. If he should deal otherwise with them at any time, the sword would condemn the rod; that is, their afflictions would be extended to a degree of severity beyond what is consistent with fatherly chastisement; but this, God graciously assures them, is what never shall, never can take place *.

When *Palæmon* affirms, that according to the popular doctrine, as he is pleased to term it, the sins of believers are less displeasing to God than the sins of other men, he, after his wonted manner, most ungenerously misrepresents the doctrine of his opponents: for thus he would make his readers believe they taught, that the sins of believers have less intrinsic evil in them, are less odious in the sight of God, and do in their own nature less deserve hell and damnation, than the sins of others; whereas every one, who has any tolerable acquaintance with their doctrine, knows that those eminent preachers whom he chiefly opposes in this matter, always maintained the very reverse, namely, that the sins of believers, though they cannot make them liable to condemnation, and the wrath to come, have the same intrinsic evil in them, and in their own nature do as much deserve the wrath and curse of God, as the sins of others. Yea so far were they from adopting or defending any such abominable tenet, as *Palæmon* would charge upon them, that they scrupled not

* Ezek. xxi. 13.

to affirm, that the sins of believers, being attended with some special aggravations beyond those of other men, are in some respects more heinous and displeasing to God, than the sins of unbelievers, who never were capable of sinning against so much light and love, as those too frequently do.

Mr. *Boston*, one of those eminent teachers whom our author shews a particular spite against, delivers his opinion with regard to this subject in the following words. “ Believers, so far as in them lies, by their sins do cast themselves into the fiery furnace of eternal wrath, so that if there was not one with them, *like unto the Son of God*, the fire should actually fasten on them; wherefore they may look on themselves, as indeed they are, *brands plucked out of the fire*; and sing that song, *Not unto us, Lord, not to us, &c.* And the truth is, as one says well, in some respects the sins of the godly are worse than the sins of others; for they grieve the Spirit more, they dishonour Christ more, they grieve the saints more, they wound the name of God more, they are more against the love and grace, and favour of God, than other mens sins are*.”

What the other noted and worthy preachers whom the letter-writer has thought fit to single out as the chief objects of his resentment, taught in relation to this point, is well known. We may challenge him, or any of his fraternity, to produce any one passage in the writings or sermons of those excellent men, that does in the least favour that unscriptural notion which he would make his readers believe is a leading article, or at least a necessary consequence of what he calls the popular

* *Miscellany Quest.* prefixed to vol. I. of his sermons, &c. published in 1753, p. 415.

doctrine,

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doctrine, though it is really the *Protestant* doctrine, concerning the believer's freedom from the guilt of sin, and the curse of the divine law.

Another instance of scandalous disingenuity in this writer, is his endeavouring to make his readers believe, that his opponents teach that it is on account of some *acts of faith* exerted by believers, that they are exempted from condemnation and the curse of the divine law *: as if those were to be considered as the ground of their justification, and the foundation of all those spiritual privileges that are consequential to the same; whereas they ever maintained, that believers are not justified, or freed from the curse of the law, on account of acts of faith, or any other acts, exerted by them, but wholly on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, which they come to be *actually interested in by faith*. And if faith is not necessary to interest a sinner in the divine righteousness, one may be justified without, as well as with it; which, I think, the letter-writer himself will scarce venture to affirm.

Whatever faith is supposed to be, or include in its nature; call it the simple belief of the truth, or what else you please; still we must maintain, that it is necessary to interest one in the benefit of the divine righteousness, or else we must allow, that a true believer of the gospel is no more justified than an unbeliever, or that there is not any such thing as *justifying faith*.

What then could this ranting writer mean by censuring that as one of the absurdities of the popular doctrine which is the unavoidable consequence of his own opinion with regard to what he calls the simple belief of the truth, which he every

* Letters, p. 419.

where

where supposes to be necessary to justification, or to our enjoying the benefit and comfort of the divine righteousness; and which cannot be refused without supposing, that, as to the matter of justification, there is no difference between a believer and an unbeliever; or, which is the same thing in effect, that whatever is taught by our Lord and his apostles in the New Testament, concerning faith and justification, and the special privileges which all true believers are entitled to and interested in, is fabulous and false, or at best only so much unmeaning jargon? Horrid thought! Hideous conclusion! Yet it must be owned, that *Palæmon's* reasonings, and the scornful censures he is pleased to pass upon those who assert the *instrumentality* of faith in justification, do really import thus much, or nothing at all.

The method our author takes to prove, that a believer, though already justified, by every sin he commits becomes abnoxious to the divine wrath, and the curse of that law which saith, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them;* is no less strange than the hypothesis itself. "A believer," says he, "can find ease to his guilty conscience only by that truth which relieves the most openly profane."

That a believer when burdened with a sense of guilt, can no otherwise obtain any suitable relief than by a new discovery of the righteousness of Christ exhibited and brought near to sinners in the gospel, and by opposing it to all charges and accusations that the divine law or his own conscience may bring against him, which every sinner of mankind who hears the gospel is equally warranted to do, is a certain truth. We do likewise allow, that a Christian after the highest attainments in grace and

and holiness, must still found his claim to acceptance with God and everlasting life wholly upon the righteousness of Christ, without supposing that any thing in or about himself does any way belong to the *ground* of his justification before God, or can contribute more or less toward his acceptance with God *.

But what is all this to the purpose? Because a believer has no personal righteousness, nothing in or about himself, to set in opposition to the demands of the divine law and justice, and the accusations of his own conscience, more than the greatest sinner belonging to the human race, but must bottom his hopes of justification and acceptance with God wholly upon that righteousness; which is also sufficient for the justification of the most wicked unbeliever; must he therefore be persuaded, that there is no difference between himself and the most openly flagitious and obstinate infidel? Because the believer must wholly rely upon the divine righteousness, revealed and brought near to sinners in the gospel, for justification, must he therefore conclude, that by every sin he commits he is brought anew into a state of wrath, and under the curse of the divine law?

If there is any sense in *Palemon's* reasoning on this subject, the amount of it must be plainly this: though a believer should on the most solid grounds be assured, that he has formerly believed on Christ, is in a justified state, and has an actual interest in all those blessings and privileges that accompany justification or are consequential thereto, among which exemption from the curse of the divine law and the wrath to come, is none of the least; yet whenever he is conscious of the commission of any

* Namely, in respect of merit or proper causality.

sin, he must either believe himself to be presently in a state of wrath and condemnation; yea, to be as much so as any unbeliever can be supposed to be, or he cannot believe the gospel, but must necessarily seek relief and comfort some other way than it directs to*. And from hence it necessarily follows, that in such a case he must believe, that one may be a true believer, united to Christ and justified, and yet be in a state of condemnation—in order to his believing the report of the gospel concerning Christ, so as to receive any benefit by it: which is to say in effect, that one must believe the gospel to be false, before he can believe it to be true: for the same gospel which declares the righteousness of Christ to be the sole ground of a sinner's justification, teaches that *he who believeth is not condemned*; and that *he shall not come into condemnation*. According to the hypothesis of the letter-writer, therefore, a believer must, at least, believe one part of what the gospel teaches to be false, before he can believe another to be true.

Our zuthor's absurd reasoning on this subject seems to be founded on this ignorant and foolish supposition, That there is no difference between a believer considered in himself, or as having no relation to Jesus Christ, and the same person considered as in Christ, cloathed with his righteousness, and interested in all the blessings and privileges procured thereby. A believer considered in himself is doubtless a child of wrath and an heir of hell, as well as others; but considered as in Christ he is wholly freed from condemnation and the curse of the law, and also has a special interest in all the

* Letters, p. 62, 63, 419.

blessings

blessings of the gospel*. Now, after union with Christ by faith, and justification the necessary consequent of it, a believer, whatever he *may* do through the remainders of spiritual darkness upon his mind, and the prevalency of unbelief, *ought* never to consider himself as being without any relation to Jesus Christ, or as standing purely upon his own bottom, but as still cloathed with the righteousness of Christ, whereby he is forever secured from wrath and condemnation, and continues still to have a special interest in all those blessings and privileges which were purchased by the righteousness and death of Christ, and are infallibly secured to all true believers by the promises of the gospel.

Thus, though a believer ought never to bottom his hopes of acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, upon his faith and former attainments; yet neither ought he to deny them, or doubt of those privileges he has a special interest in, and which are effectually secured to him by virtue of his union with Christ by faith. To maintain a just sense of these, and take comfort and encouragement from them, is no way inconsistent with that trust and confidence in Christ alone for acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, which the gospel requires.

To rest on former experiences and attainments, as any way contributing to our acceptance with God, cannot indeed consist with a relying wholly upon Christ, and his finished work, for justification

* This truth is set forth with so great evidence in the apostolic writings, particularly *Rom.* vii. 1—6. and chap. viii. 1, 2. that it is surprising any pretended lover of the apostolic gospel should have had the fore head to deny it.

and salvation; but an assurance and humble acknowledgment of them to the praise of divine grace, is every way consistent with a total overlooking of them, and renouncing all confidence in them, in the matter of justification before God.

How frequently does the apostle *Paul* make mention of what the Lord had done for him and wrought in him, whereby doubtless he was distinguished from the “most openly profane *?” Did not he comfort himself and take encouragement from the review and serious consideration thereof, being fully assured, that he who had delivered would still deliver; that he who had begun the good work would carry it on, until the day of Jesus Christ †? But dare any alledge, will the letter-writer venture to affirm, that while the apostle did in this manner look back on his former experiences and attainments, and draw such comfortable conclusions from them, “he ceased to be a believer, or rather made “it appear that he never was one?”

The great apostle of the *Gentiles* never imagined, as *Palæmon* does, that in order to a glorying only in the cross of Christ, a believer must deny all his former attainments, with that special relation to Jesus Christ which commenced immediately on his first believing on the name of the Son of God; and acknowledge that there is nothing either conferred upon him, or wrought in him, that can distinguish him from “the most openly profane — “the most infamous scoundrel — the vilest pro-
“stitute — or, in a word, from the greatest sing-
“leader in profaneness and excess †.” Such rea-

* Acts xxii. 3—21. chap. xxvi. 13—20. Rom. vii.
8, 9, 10. Gal. i. 16. chap. ii. 19, 20. &c.

† 2 Cor. i. 10. Philip. i. 6. † Letters, p. 60, 61, 62.

ries seem to be peculiar to the letter-writer and his fraternity.

But though our author can, to serve a turn, make shift to varnish over his wild imaginations of this sort with some colour of truth, and thereby puzzle the mind of a weak reader, and make those cavils and reproaches by which he endeavours to fix an *odium* on the doctrine and character of his opponents, appear somewhat more plausible, there is reason to think he is far enough from believing them himself. Can it be supposed that he and his brethren, who arrogate to themselves the character of the only true believers of the ancient apostolic gospel, and call themselves the only church of Christ and kingdom of heaven upon earth, after all their acts of faith, or works of charity and self-denied obedience — imagine that there is nothing in and about them, or done by them, whereby they are distinguished from their *Pharisaical* opponents, and those self-seeking men who, if we may believe our new friends of the ancient gospel, have used their utmost endeavours to corrupt and pervert the true doctrine of the grace of God, chiefly with a view to set forth the importance of their own precious persons and character; or even, as our author loves to speak, from the most openly profane? Believe it who will, as the honest highlander said of *transubstantiation*, “it will not believe for me.”

After what has been said, I presume, it will appear abundantly evident to every intelligent reader, that what *Palæmon* teaches concerning a believer's liability to condemnation or vindictive wrath for every sin he commits, is so far from being any part, that it is indeed the very reverse of the apostolic doctrine on this head; and pregnant with a number of such palpable and shocking absurdities as no man in his right mind can digest or admit.

It

It might be observed before we leave this subject, that if every sin which the believer commits makes him obnoxious to the divine wrath and curse of that law, which says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*; it is plain, that there cannot possibly be any such thing as a state of justification; or at least that the believer cannot remain in it, no, not for one moment; for every sin, even the least sin *inherent*—as well as that which is actually committed by him, being contrary to the righteous law and holy nature of God, deserves his wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come. If this *desert* then makes a believer liable to the curse, of the law, and the wrath to come, and, which is yet more, brings him *actually* under it; and no man, no, not the greatest saint is able of himself, or by virtue of any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed; it is manifest beyond contradiction, that no man ever was, or can be justified in this life, or at least continue so one day, or even one moment: unless we shall suppose, that the same person, at one and the same time, may be both justified and condemned, or under the wrath and curse of God, and yet really delivered from both; which is equally repugnant to Scripture and common sense.

We might further add, that our author's hypothesis above-mentioned does virtually contain, and cannot be maintained without adopting a number of *Popish* errors, long since exploded by the church of Christ, as diametrically repugnant to the Sacred Writings; such as, these concerning the possibility, yea, the necessity, of *perfection in this life, in order to perfect or complete justification*; — concerning the distinction betwixt *venial* and *mortal sins*, and *inward*

inward concupiscence, as being no sin; — concerning the possibility of a believer's falling totally from a state of grace and justification, &c.

Thus, we see that some of the most material articles of Palemon's creed are nothing else but some old Popish notions revived, and put into a new dress, by the help of some ambiguous phrases and laboured circumlocutions; and which have a veil of mysticism frequently drawn over them whereby they are concealed from the view of inattentive and ignorant readers, who often cannot distinguish a system of the grossest and most fulsom errors from the apostolic gospel, if the former is only coloured over with a little art, and some plausible, though deceitful appearance of truth.

However little regard the letter-writer shews for the interests of religion and godliness on other occasions, it would seem from his manner of writing on this subject, that for once he affects to appear somewhat jealous of them; and to discover some fear lest they should suffer by what he calls the popular doctrine concerning the believer's exemption from the condemning sentence and curse of the divine law, notwithstanding his sins after conversion and justification: therefore it may not be improper to add here, that if any should so far abuse the doctrine of the grace of God, or what is taught in the Scriptures, and by all sound Protestant divines agreeably thereto, concerning the great privilege of believers in being wholly delivered from the curse of the law and wrath of God, and all further liability thereto, as to take encouragement from thence to indulge themselves in the practice or commission of any sin, it may be taken as a certain evidence, that they are ignorant both of the gospel and of the true God; and that when they lay claim to any such privilege, and make their vaunt of it, they boast of

a false gift, or of a privilege which they have no real interest in: for that doctrine when rightly understood, and suitably applied, never fails to have a quite contrary effect; and is indeed one of the most powerful motives, and the strongest incentive and encouragement to the study and practice of true evangelical holiness. This the apostle *Paul* clearly intimates in the following words: *The grace of God that bringeth salvation, and consequently redemption from the curse of the law and wrath of God, hath appeared to all men, namely, in the revelation and promises of the gospel, teaching us, who by faith and union with Christ have been made actual partakers thereof, and are fully assured of this our great privilege, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we shall live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ**.

But though love to God, produced and maintained in the hearts of true believers by the faith and firm persuasion of his grace, mercy and love, in Christ, toward them, is one of the most powerful incitements to holiness and evangelical obedience; the consideration of his infinite holiness and justice, and of his wrath revealed in his law against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, is no doubt of singular use for deterring them from sin; as thereby the intrinsic evil and demerit of sin are clearly manifested, and they led to entertain more exalted thoughts of the grace of God, whereby they are delivered from that dreadful wrath which is the just desert of every sin they commit.

This seems to be the true import of the passage which *Palæmon* quotes from the epistle to the *He-*

* Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13.

brews:

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brews : Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire *.

These words in the first clause of ver. 28. We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved — must certainly imply an assured hope of heaven and everlasting happiness, and consequently of deliverance from eternal wrath : therefore to explain ver.

29, Our God is a consuming fire, of a believer's likableness to that wrath, or as containing a reason why he should, in the whole course of his obedience to the law of God, be influenced by the fear of hell and damnation, would be to make the apostle contradict himself, or maintain that while a Christian is on the most solid grounds assured of his deliverance from the wrath to come, he may and ought to fear, that, on the least defect or failure in his obedience, it will be executed upon him ; which would really be the same thing as to affirm, that a believer may and ought to be assured of his salvation, and yet doubt of it, at one and the same time.

It is not easy to understand what the letter-writer means by reflecting on some preachers for the use of that scriptural and well-known maxim, which he impiously calls the jargon of the popular doctrine †, " God out of Christ is a consuming fire." If he intends in this manner to insinuate, that God never deals with any of the children of men, but as a God in Christ ; then it must be allowed, that God is in Christ condemning sinners and punishing for sin, as well as reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. How far this notion is consistent with the apostle's declaration ‡,

* Heb. xii. 28, 29. † Letters, p. 419.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 19.

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or the record of God himself concerning his Son,
published by an audible voice from heaven in these
words, *This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well
pleased**, let the reader judge.

What is God in Christ, but God considered as re-conciled and well pleased in Christ, or for his righteousness sake, whereby his holy law is magnified and made honourable, his infinite justice satisfied and honoured, and all his adorable perfections glorified, in such a manner as they could never have been by the unfinning obedience of men or angels? And what is God *out of Christ*, or an *absolute God*, but the same infinite Majesty considered as dealing with men in the way of strict justice, and according to the tenor of a broken law or covenant of works; which only denounces wrath and vengeance against the transgressors thereof; against all sinners who have no special interest in Christ's righteousness and sacrifice, and especially against those who despise and reject all the proposals and promises of grace made to them in the everlasting gospel?

To assert, then, that we ought never to conceive of God as *out of Christ*, or as an *absolute God*, is in effect to maintain, that we ought never to conceive of him as an angry and sin-revenging God; or, which is equally absurd, that God in condemning and punishing sinners ought to be considered as re-conciled; yea, that he may be considered as not imputing, and yet imputing their trespasses to them; as absolving them from the guilt of sin, and yet condemning and punishing them for it.

But I am ashamed to encroach upon the reader's patience by answering a cavil which deserves no manner of notice, being full as impertinent and senseless as it is impious and blasphemous.

* Matt. iii. 17.

We have already had occasion to consider some extravagant notions advanced by the letter-writer concerning *justification*, which if admitted will make it very difficult, yea altogether impossible to shew what advantage a believer has above an unbeliever in respect of his state before God ; or what benefit the former can be said to receive by the imputed righteousness : — and if we inquire into his sentiments with regard to *sanctification* and *inherent grace*, we shall find them to be no less unscriptural and absurd. The substance of what he teaches in relation to this subject may be comprised in the following article.

ARTICLE XVII.

THE RE is no abiding principle of grace implanted in the hearts of believers by the power of the Holy Ghost ; nor is there any such thing as inherent or subjective grace, on account of which any one man can justly be said to be more holy than another.

REMARKS.

HOWEVER uncouth and impious this notion may, at first sight, appear to be, those who have carefully perused the letters on *Theron and Aspasio* will easily perceive, that it is the scope of a great part of that performance to instil it into the mind of the reader. When it is considered what improvement the letter-writer makes of the doctrine of the grace of God, and the article of justification through the imputed righteousness, it will evidently

appear, that all the strong things which he affects to speak concerning the *atonement*, the sovereignty of divine grace, and the excellency of the divine righteousness, as being the *sole requisite* to justification, are chiefly intended to depreciate and vilify *inherent* grace, and the *internal* operation of the Spirit of God in the hearts of men, which all sound divines have hitherto, agreeably to the Scriptures, taught to be absolutely necessary; not as a ground of acceptance with God, or as being any part of their justifying righteousness, but in order to a believing the report of the gospel, so as to receive the *gift of righteousness*, and actually enjoy the benefit of it; and for enabling the sinner, who is by nature weak and impotent, yea wholly *dead in trespasses and sins*, to live unto God, and bring forth the fruits of holiness and acceptable obedience to his law.

To maintain the necessity of any such internal work of the divine Spirit upon the hearts of men, or of the implantation of a living and abiding principle of grace in their souls, for these and the like ends and purposes, is what *Palæmon* calls “the *capital characteristic* of the popular doctrine.” And he has even the assurance to call the grace of the Holy Ghost, implanted in the souls of believers, “the *counterfeit grace* *.” And the Divine Author of that grace, who teaches and powerfully determines them to make any suitable improvement and application of the doctrine and promises of the gospel, or of the grace of God manifested in the atonement, he profanely styles a *private Spirit*, and “the *Spirit of the popular doctrine* †.” After pouring such contempt upon the blessed Spirit of a grace we need not be surprised to find this writer

* Letters, p. 445.

† P. 35.

vilifying

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vilifying and reproaching *his work*, by calling the inward principle of grace and holiness, produced in the hearts of all true believers, "that cruel some-
thing which the attention of ALL WHO AC-
KNOWLEDGE IT is so much engrossed in the
pursuit of, that they mistake, neglect, and despise
the simple report of the gospel; so cannot find
the comfort which it yields to every one who
understands and holds it for true." This, he is
pleased to say, "stings to death all who covet
it; all who bewail the want, and all who re-
joice in the possession of it; leads the former
through a tiresome and gloomy path into utter
darkness, and lulls asleep the latter on the top of
a precipice, soothes them awhile with pleasing
dreams, then throws them down headlong at
last*."

These hints are sufficiently plain, and import not only a denial of any such thing as *inherent grace*, or an *internal work* of the Spirit of God upon the soul, but, what is still more, that the acknowledgement of any such thing is damnable; whence I think it is manifest, that in a bold and contemptuous opposition to the whole work of the Holy Ghost in the *conversion*, *regeneration*, and *sanctification* of believers, he has outdone all that ever went before him. For though there have not been wanting some in former ages who have reproached and ridiculed the work of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of men, and all pretensions to it, made by certain classes of men, as mere *enthusiasm* and *fanaticism*, I do not remember, that any of them ever ventured in such strong terms to deny, that there is, or can be *any* such thing. And indeed with regard to this matter our author has by many degrees exceeded the gross-

* Letters, p. 94.

lest *Pelagians* in heresy and blasphemy. — He charges all who suppose an internal work of the Holy Spirit, or inherent grace and sanctification, to be in any respect necessary to salvation, with neglecting and despising the gospel ; and is even so bold as to affirm, that they are in a state of damnation, and walking in the path that leads to utter darkness. All who pray for, desire, or profess to have any experience of a quickening, enlightening and sanctifying work of the Spirit of God upon their own souls, or imagine, that the inward and efficacious operation of divine grace must concur with the external revelation of the gospel, in order to the conversion and salvation of sinners, do, according to him, disbelieve, and despise the simple report of the gospel, and shew a *Jewish* disgust at the bare truth, or the bare work of Christ finished on the cross *. Yea, he carries the matter so far as plainly to insinuate, that if any, even after they have been brought into a state of justification, and *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, do imagine, that they are possessed of any grace, or holiness, that can in the least distinguish them from the most profligate and profane sinner that lives ; they are ignorant both of the gospel and of the true God †.

The Scripture every where teaches the necessity of *inherent* and *subjective*, as well as *objective* grace, and informs us, that the Lord Jesus saves his people by the power of his Spirit, as well as the merit of his righteousness ; that no man can come unto him, so as actually to receive any saving benefit by his merits and mediation, but those who are *taught of God, or bear and learn of the Father*, and whom the Father DRAWS, by the gracious, internal, and effectual operation of his Holy Spirit ‡ ; that though he

* Letters, p. 94, 95, 99. † Letters, p. 61, 62, 63,
64.—419. ‡ John vi. 44, 45.

justifies,

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justifies, and receives them into a state of reconciliation and favour with himself, *not on account of any works of righteousness done by them, yet still he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the RENEWING of the Holy Ghost**; and, in fine, that the *sanc*tification of the Spirit is no less necessary to salvation than the belief of the truth*†.*

But the letter-writer is so far from allowing, that an *internal work of the divine Spirit upon the heart* is requisite in order to make the word of the gospel effectual for the salvation of sinners, as to give plain hints importing, that to maintain the necessity of any such thing is dangerous and damnable, and to pretend to any experience thereof a sufficient indication of Pharisaical pride, and disaffection to the true doctrine of the grace of God. This *inward grace* of the Holy Ghost, which through a strange kind of infatuation peculiar to those who are under the influence, and actuated by the energy of a Spirit of error, he still opposes to *objective grace*, or, as he loves to speak, to the grace of God manifested in the atonement, is what he calls the *wished-for something*; which, according to him, so engages and engrosses the attention of the votaries of the popular doctrine, that they “ have no ear to give to any “ thing that can be said of the truth and certainty “ of the gospel, and the grand things of God re- “ ported there.” And says this Gentleman, “ No “ sooner are they possessed of this, but they begin to “ look down, with a solemn pride, upon the rest “ of mankind, as profane; and to complain a- “ loud of the prevalency of infidelity and irreligi- “ on”‡; regretting, no doubt, that that for which “ they

* Tit. iii. 4, 5. † 2 Thes. ii. 13.

‡ *Palæmon and his brethren, the pretended friends of the ancient gospel, have things of a very different nature*

"they value themselves, is not sufficiently esteemed by the rest of mankind." "This," adds he, "is indeed the great center of the popular doctrine, the very axis on which it turns. Here all its lines are united. — All the divine attributes, works, and words, are introduced as handmaids & subservient to this favourite distinction. — The power and cunning of Satan is to be guarded against; chiefly, as opposed to this*."

The reader may find a great deal more to the same purpose in the *Letters on Theron*, &c. particularly the first three; but we are weary of transcribing such impious jargon, the manifest tendency of which is to expose all serious religion and godliness to contempt, and to encourage men in the

nature to lament. Any apparent success of the gospel, any seeming revival of the purity of gospel-doctrine, in opposition to their *Pelagian* and *Popish* notions, and any attempts for promoting public reformation, and the interests of religion and practical godliness, appear to give them more uneasiness than any thing else. These are the things which make them, if not to *bowl*, *pray*, and *groan* — yet to *grin* and *gnash* their teeth with pain. — We can point to a few practical treatises on religion, viz. *Gisbry's Trial*, &c. *Marshall on Sanctification*, *Boson's four-fold State of Man*, *Hervey's Dialogues*, &c. all excellently well calculated for promoting the interests of real godliness, which seem to be a much greater eye-sore to them than all the wicked, blasphemous, and atheistical books and pamphlets that have been published in the present age. If, after all, they will be called the friends of the apostolic gospel, by way of eminency, as we have no inclination to differ with them about words, we are willing to allow them the title, for this good reason, that they are the greatest enemies to it, that this, or perhaps any age has produced.

* *Letters*, p. 95.

practice

practice of impiety and wickedness, by endeavouring to make them believe, that those who are wont to be esteemed religious and godly persons, are in reality nothing else but a number of Pharisaical, canting hypocrites ; and that the greatest saint on earth cannot be said to be more holy than the most profane debauchee.

From an attentive consideration of the passages already transcribed, and many others of a like nature, that might be quoted from the *letters on Theron, &c.* we may have a pretty good view of the scope and design of a great part of the author's reasoning, warm declamations, and bitter invectives against some noted preachers, whom he invidiously styles the popular preachers. His great quarrel with them, is not because they maintained, that inherent grace, or a renewing and sanctifying work of the divine Spirit upon the hearts of men, with the several fruits and effects thereof, are necessary as a ground of justification and acceptance with God, or to lay a foundation for some distinguished claim to the benefit of the divine righteousness ; for every one, who has the least acquaintance with their writings and sermons, knows, and he cannot be ignorant, that they always taught the very reverse ; namely, that though justification and sanctification are inseparable, yet the latter is never the cause of the former, but posterior to it in order of nature ; and that though none can believe the gospel so as to obtain an actual interest in the blessings thereof, till he is powerfully inclined, determined, and enabled by the Spirit of God so to do, yet no experience of any such internal operation of the divine Spirit upon their hearts, does at all belong to the grounds of faith or justification ; this being procured only by the righteousness of Christ, while that is wholly founded on the word, testimo-

ny, and gracious promise of God addressed to sinners of mankind indefinitely, or without distinction, in the gospel. What *Palæmon* must therefore chiefly blame those worthy men for, is their teaching, that any such thing as *inherent grace*, or the *internal* and effectual operation of the Holy Spirit upon the souls of men, is at all necessary.

We find this author sometimes insinuating, that wherever any thing of this kind is to be found, the possessors will not fail to be sufficiently sensible of it, and regard it as a reason why all the comforts of the gospel should bear a peculiar direction, or respect, toward them in distinction from others.— If we may believe him, no man can be conscious of any grace or good thing that can be supposed to distinguish him from the most impious and profigate sinner, and not consider it as contributing somewhat, more or less, toward his acceptance with God, and furnishing him with some peculiar claim upon the Deity. For he thinks it absurd to imagine, that every man's pride is not equal to his worth*. If it is so indeed, it is evident, that

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* Letters, p. 45.

By worth here doubtless he means piety and religion, as well as vain pretensions to them. If therefore his *maxim*, namely, That every man's pride is equal to his worth, is admitted, it will necessarily follow, that the more pious and religious any man is, the more proud he is. Now, he will readily grant, I presume, that pride is one of the most vicious and wicked affections that human nature can be tainted with; and that the more proud any man is the more wicked he is. It is therefore the native consequence of his *maxim*, that the more holy and religious any man is, the more wicked he must, of necessity, be. And as it will still hold true, that the more humble any man is, the more there is of true worth in him; if every man's pride must be allowed

there can be no such thing as any true holiness in the world ; or supposing there was, it would be rather hurtful than profitable, as tending necessarily to puff up men with such a conceit of themselves and their own righteousness, as would make it very difficult, yea altogether impossible for them to pay any due regard to the report of the gospel, or maintain just notions of the work of Christ finished upon the cross.

The apostle asserts, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; and He who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, testifies, that *except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; but according to our author's method of reasoning, regeneration and sanctification are so far from being necessary

allowed to be equal to his worth, the more humble any man is, he must necessarily be the more proud. To assert either of these, as every one must do, who admits the letter-writer's *maxim* afore-mentioned, I think, as one speaks, may be called blasphemy against common sense. Methinks Palæmon has full as much reason as the popular preachers to recur to mystery for veiling such absurdities as these, which doubtless will never go down with any, till they have been prevailed upon to renounce not only their religion, but reason and common sense.

Some would make us believe they have received much light from this Gentleman's reasonings; but, for my part, I think, I should receive full as much light from one that would tell me, that *two and three make five*, as I can do from his dissertations on any subject he has treated of. But such confidence has Palæmon to put in his own abilities and extraordinary penetration, that, as we will see afterwards, he does not altogether despair of being able to reconcile the two fides of a contradiction.

necessary to *salvation*, that any experience or consciousness of either, must needs incline men to neglect and despise the simple report of the gospel, and lead them into such mistakes about the divine grace manifested in the atonement, as will prove “the fatal means of utterly excluding such as uncertain them, from partaking of the great and eternal benefit conveyed by that grace to all who know and understand it in simplicity*.”

The hinge of the controversy between *Palæmon* and his opponents, with relation to the subject under consideration, chiefly turns upon this question, Whether an *internal* work of grace and sanctification is in any respect necessary to salvation? This they affirm, as being taught and inculcated almost in every page of the Sacred Writings, both of the Old and New Testament. He, on the other hand,

It would be vain for the letter-writer to attempt a vindication of himself with regard to the loose assertion formerly mentioned, by alledging he only meant, that men in a natural, or unreviewed state, can do no good actions, nor be possessed of any good qualifications: — for as it is qualified by no such restriction, it is plain, that many of the scurrilous reproaches whereby he has attempted to pour contempt upon all Christian exercise and experience, and the whole practice of godliness, are built upon a supposition of the same nature with his favourite maxim, That every man's pride is equal to his worth. It is true, where he comes to speak of his own sort of believers, he would seem to allow full scope for all the exercises of religion, and acts of obedience to the divine law; but all that can be inferred from thence, is, that there, as almost every where else, he shamefully contradicts himself, and would obtrude upon us the most wretched inconsistencies. But what else can be expected from such a——writer as *Palæmon*?

* Letters, p. 17.

does as confidently deny it, on pretence that the admitting of any such thing has a tendency to depreciate the merit of the divine righteousness, and lead men to establish a righteousness of their own as a ground of acceptance with God, or at least to do, or labour to feel and experience something in themselves which may afford them a reason for advancing some peculiar claim upon the Deity, as the Gentleman has thought fit to express himself.

It must be owned he has never fairly stated the question as we have done just now, or in express terms denied the necessity of regeneration, holiness and obedience to the law of God. He was doubtless aware, that such plain dealing would have too much exposed him, and made the absurdity and impiety of his scheme manifest to all men; so that he could have had no opportunity of instilling his licentious and heretical notions into the minds of his readers with any prospect of success. Therefore he still shifts the point in debate, and uses his utmost endeavours to disguise and conceal his real sentiments on this head. Thus after treating the *whole work* of the Holy Ghost in regeneration and sanctification with the most profane contempt, and throwing out the most bitter invectives and reproaches against all who teach the necessity, or profess to have experience of any such thing, he endeavours to make the inattentive reader believe his only design is to vindicate the apostolic doctrine concerning the *ground* of a sinner's justification before God. He attempts to justify his impious assertions and blasphemous insinuations concerning the grace of the Holy Spirit implanted, and operating in the souls of believers, by affirming, that nothing beside the bare work of Christ finished upon the cross can contribute more or less toward a sinner's acceptance with God; as if

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the latter could not be asserted without denying and vilifying the former.

A remarkable instance of his wicked prevarication, and scandalous disingenuity, in handling this subject, we have p. 95, 96, where, after pouring the utmost contempt upon the work of the Divine Spirit in the hearts of men, and all desires after any experience thereof upon the soul, under the notion of that *favourite something* which leads men to mistake, neglect, and despise the simple report of the gospel, and blasphemously insinuating, that an *apprehension* of the *necessity* of any such renewing and sanctifying work of the Spirit is what the Scripture warns against, as “the great engine “employed to blind the minds of men, lest the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who “is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—he very impertinently concludes the paragraph with these words: “It will appear, that if we “imagine we possess, or desire to attain any re-“quisite to our acceptance with God, either aside “from, or in connection with the bare work of “Christ—Christ is become of no effect unto us—“Christ shall profit us nothing.”

Palæmon would have his ignorant reader believe, that this is the sum of all that he had been formerly asserting in reference to *inherent grace* and *holiness*, and that it is only for teaching something inconsistent therewith, that he inveighs so warmly against his antagonists; whereas his remark is quite foreign to the subject he had been before treating of; and, if rightly understood, is indeed the very truth those eminent preachers whose doctrine he chiefly attacks, made it their business to teach and inculcate in all their writings and sermons. They never affirmed, that *inherent grace*, *regeneration*, *sanctification*, or any of the fruits and effects thereof, are

are necessary as *grounds* of acceptance with God; but, on the contrary, still maintained, that the righteousness of Christ, or, if you please, "his "bare work finished on the cross," is the sole ground of a sinner's justification before God: he had therefore no ground to quarrel with them for their doctrine in relation to this point. It must doubtless be something else that has provoked his resentment, and inflamed his zeal, such as it is, against them, almost to a degree of distraction: and it is plainly this; that they taught the necessity of *sanctification* as well as *justification*; or, that the *sanctification of the Spirit* must always accompany the *belief of the truth*, in order to salvation. It is for inculcating this sentiment, which one would think must be acknowledged to be scriptural, if any other can be accounted such, that *Palæmon* charges them with "WORSHIPPING ANOTHER GOD," or "*furnishing themselves with a deity according to their taste**." Their pleading for the necessity of holiness, on any consideration whatsoever, has in such a manner awakened the resentment of the pretended friends of the ancient gospel, that *R. S.* in his second letter to *Mr. Pike*, tells us, "*Pa-*
"læmon makes use of every weapon he can lay his
"hand upon, and according to his various occa-
"sions lays hold on every weapon he can most
"readily wield, and by which he may cut deepest,
"whether it be keen satyr, disdainful irony, the
"contemptuous smile, indignant frown, or more
"cool reasoning: and that all along he appears
"to think very gravely, that the Scripture sup-
"ports him in all this†."

* Letters, p. 326. † *Epistolary Correspond. between S. P. and R. S.* p. 18.

But

But whatever *Palæmon* may appear, or rather might affect to think, it may justly be questioned, whether it was possible for him really to think, that the Scripture supported him in using his most vigorous efforts to undermine and subvert some of the most important truths contained and inculcated herein; and which he himself, one would think, must certainly know to be so. One thing is certain, namely, that the apostles never taught him the use of the weapons he most readily lays hold on, in defending the doctrines of Christianity; for they used weapons of a very different nature for demolishing the bulwarks and strong holds of the devil's kingdom in the hearts of men. *The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds,* &c. —*In meekness they instructed those that opposed themselves* †. But the weapons *Palæmon* most frequently uses, and most readily wields, are sharp and bitter words, and bold calumnies, which for the most part are as groundless as they are invidious. He who put it into the heart of this impious writer to lie against the truth, has also taught him the use of those weapons by which he has endeavoured to pervert and overthrow it. However, in this all who love the truth may be confident, that *no weapon formed against it shall prosper*, though formed and wielded by a far more skilful and masterly hand, than that of the author of the letters on *Theron and Aspasio*.

From what has been already observed it evidently appears, that the matter in question between *Palæmon* and his antagonists, is not, Whether inherent grace and holiness are necessary as a ground of justification or acceptance with God?

* 2 Cor. x. 4.

† 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

but

but, Whether they are necessary on *any* account? or, whether there is, or can be *any such thing* among men? He, contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, determines in the negative; and hence makes every appearance or semblance of practical religion and godliness a subject of ridicule, and treats all Christian exercise and experience with the most profane contempt, as will appear from the following passages in his letters. — “ Jesus was not only so numbered with transgressors, as to sustain the character of the *worst* of them; but he was also so numbered with them unto death, as that the *worst* of them might be numbered unto life with him. It was necessary, that the Saviour should thus be numbered with transgressors, that all the redeemed of the Lord might see the divine grace in the same point of view. — Let every man then chuse his own company. Let him who is ashamed of such low company as this, by all means keep his proper distance. Let him follow the ancient and modern *patrons of holiness**; who will furnish him with a Deity according to his taste †.”

From this passage it would appear, that, in the opinion of our author, the more unholy, impious, and profligate men are, the more they are favoured by Christ, and the better qualified for church-communion; and that the followers of Christ ought to treat such as friends and favourites, while they look with an indignant frown upon, and treat with the greatest contempt, all who have any appearance of

* Hence some may infer, that, according to our author, our Saviour and his apostles did not favour holiness, but were patrons of impiety and wickedness: Monstrous! Who would not shudder at the thought?

† Letters, p. 325, 326.

godliness

godliness and vital religion, as being on that very account enemies to the gospel, and despisers of the divine righteousness. In short, the stoutest and most enormous sinners must be caressed and encouraged ; and all with whom we can perceive the least semblance of piety, discouraged and despised as *Pharisees* and hypocrites. Whether these and the like sentiments favour most of *Apostolic Christianity* or *Antinomian licentiousness*, we leave the reader to determine.

The letter-writer sometimes insinuates, that to bewail the growth and prevalency of open wickedness, impiety and infidelity, or shew the least uneasiness on account of any thing of that kind, is a sure indication of spiritual pride, and a Pharisaical temper. What then shall we think of the *mourners in Zion** ? of the men who *sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the midst of Jerusalem*† ? or of any few who are found, at any time, agreeably to the Prophet's exhortation ‡, weeping in secret, or in the public assemblies of God's people, for their own sins and the sins of a professing people among whom they live, and crying, *Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not up thine heritage to reproach* ?

If Palæmon's notion of *Pharisaism*, and the evidence of a Pharisaical disposition, is just, I am afraid the apostle *Paul* will be found acting the part of a proud *Pharisee* as much after as before his conversion : for we find him sometimes not only complaining of, but most bitterly bewailing the infidelity both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*. As to the former, he declares in the most solemn manner, that, when reflecting on their melancholy condition, he had *great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart* ||.

* *Isai. lvii. 18.*, chap. *Ixi. 3.* † *Ezek. ix. 4.* ‡ *Joel ii. 17.* || See *Rom. ix. 1, 2.*

Now, it is natural to think, that the unbelief of the *Jews*, his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh, their despising and rejecting of Christ the promised *Messiah*, was not the least, if not the principal cause of that great heaviness and sorrow which took place with him on their account. And elsewhere we find the same apostle heavily complaining of, and lamenting, with tears, those evidences of real infidelity which appeared with many of the *Gentiles* who made a profession of the name of Christ. *Many walk*, says he, *of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ* *.

From these passages, and others of a like nature in the epistles of *Paul*, it is evident, that it was usual for him to lament and bewail any evidences or appearances of unbelief, or infidelity and contempt of the gospel of Christ, wherever they were to be met with among professors of religion, or those to whom the gospel was preached, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*: and we may be sure all the other apostles were like-minded; for did they not *walk in the same spirit, and in the same steps?* And whatever *Palemon* may think, we doubt not to affirm, that in mourning, and a hearty grief for the prevalency and appearances of infidelity among men,— for the little success and great contempt of the gospel, and other evils dishonouring to God and destructive to the souls of men, the apostles far out-went any popular preachers, or votaries of the popular doctrine, who have lived since their time; as without doubt they did all others that were contemporary with them. According to our author's hypothesis, with regard to pride and Pharisaism,

the conclusion is manifest; — The apostles were — but I blush to repeat it.

After what has been observed it may well surprise any one, that the letter-writer should have had the assurance to tell us, “ That we never find the apostles murmuring,” *mourning* he should have said, for that he means, “ at the prevalency of infidelity, or the small success the gospel had in the world :” and “ that it gave them no disturbance to see unbelievers neglecting — the Lord’s day, and the rest of the Christian institutions.” This is just as true as that which he insinuates concerning our blessed Lord himself, namely, that in his doctrine and ministrations he gave no instructions with regard to any public reformation ; and that what he chiefly witnessed against during the course of his public ministry on earth, was, not any public sins or defections from the purity of religion and reformation once attained to ; — such as the popular preachers and their votaries are wont to lament ; but any appearance or semblance of piety that still remained among the Jews †. But if we consult the history of the evangelists we shall find, that there was scarce any one public or national step of defection gone into by the Jewish church in that period, which our Lord did not, in the course of his ministry, particularly and openly bear testimony against. And that he bewailed the unbelief and impenitency of the Jews, with other evils which abounded among them, will hardly be doubted by any who call to mind that passage which informs us, that when he beheld the city, Jerusalem, he wept over it, saying, *If thou hadst*

* Letters, p. 146. † P. 54, 64. comp. with p. 146, 147, 148. and p. 438, 439, 440.

known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes *. If the popular preachers and their votaries, then, are blamed for lamenting the prevailing of unbelief, infidelity, impenitency, and other epidemic evils that take place among a people privileged with the dispensation of the gospel, the ground of the accusation must be, that, according to their measure, they endeavour to imitate the example of their blessed Master, and give too plain evidences of their being led by the same Spirit which animated his holy human nature.

But *Palæmon* will tell us, that all their complaints of the evils above-mentioned have only proceeded, as they still do, from a kind of religious pride, and a vain conceit of their own sanctity. Thus he speaks: " Many trusting in themselves, that they are more eminently godly than others, look down with a solemn pride on the rest of mankind, and are greatly encouraged in this pride by their teachers. Whereas the members of one Christian church ought to have the same love one towards another †; yet many are encouraged to look down on their fellows, in the same communion, as ungodly and profane. Many have their pride not a little gratified, by complaining of the defections of the church whereof they are members. They feed upon these defections, in

* Luke xix. 41, 42.

† Had not *Palæmon* lost himself, as he does too often, in some of his wild reveries when treating on this subject, he might have known, that the question here is not, Whether the members of the same Christian church ought to love the persons? but, Whether they ought to love the *sins* of one another? When he ventures to assert this, it will be time enough to make a reply to his unmeaning jargon on this head.

" members.

" the midst of all the mournful airs they assume,
 " with a delicious sort of self-applause ; because
 " they are thus reminded of their own excellency.
 " Take away this fund of religious discourse and
 " meditation from some people, and you leave
 " them little religion behind *."

Here one is readily reminded of the question,
*Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? to
 his own master he standeth or falleth †.* — Is this a
 disciple of the apostles ? If it is unlawful for Chris-
 tians to lament, or complain of any evils or cor-
 ruptions that may take place in a church whereof
 they are members, then certainly the apostle *Paul*
 was much to be blamed for making mention and
 complaining of a factious, contentious, carnal, and
 earthly spirit, with several other evils and corrup-
 tions, which he observed taking place among the
 members of the church of *Corinth* ; especially as he
 gave broad hints, that there were some in commu-
 nion with that church, who, notwithstanding their
 great knowledge, and the excellent gifts they were
 endued with, were void of true grace, yea many of
 them chargeable with licentious and wicked prac-
 tices ‡. The like hints we have in some other of
 his epistles concerning some who were still in com-
 munion with the church. But, according to our au-
 thor's supposition, the apostle *Jude* was yet more
 culpable in complaining of some *ungodly* and pro-
 fane men who had *unawares crept into the church*,
 and, for any thing we can learn, were still in com-
 munion with her ||.

Another instance of that hearty contempt which
 the letter-writer has for the exercise of godliness,

* Letters, p. 438, 439. † Rom. xiv. 4. ‡ 1 Cor.
 i. 10—13. v. 11. vi. 9, 10. xi. 16—19. xiii. 1—3.
 xv. 33, 34. 2 Cor. xiii. 20, 21. || Jude 4.

particularly that part of it which consists in mourning for sin, and the dishonour done to God by the open violation and contempt of his holy law, ordinances and institutions, too frequent among those who are called by his name, may be seen in the following passage. " It is common with those " who are possessed of the fore-mentioned zeal, " whether churchmen or dissenters, to lament " the decay of religion, the contempt of the go- " spel and gospel ministers, the open profanation of " the Lord's day, the little frequenting of ordi- " nances, the increase of infidelity, and, in a " word, every thing that spoils the public decor- " um as to religion, or that serves to lessen that " weight and influence which they apprehend their " religious character or office intitles them to in " the nation *."

I had always thought they were the best Christians who were most deeply affected with a sense of the dishonours done to God by those among whom they live, and most frequently employed in mourning for the abominations done in the midst of a professing people. I am sure if we may believe the Scriptures they are so; but if we may credit *Palæmon*, to lament any public defections or corrup- tions, yea the most enormous acts of wickedness that may be found among a people professing religion, is a sure indication of hypocrisy and Pharisaical pride.— The most palpable breaches of the divine law, the most daring impiety, and the most flagitious enormities, it seems, are, in his opinion, pretty harmless things, that need not give any body great uneasiness, having no great evil in them fur- ther than they spoil the *public decorum* as to religion. And in one place he appears to assign as a reason

* Letters, p. 440, 441.

why we should not mourn or be grieved for the progress of infidelity, " that it would ill become us to grudge those who are chargeable with it, " the liberty which the author of nature and of the gospel allows them *." If this argument has any weight in it, I know not why any should grudge themselves the same liberty, that is, liberty to commit the most enormous acts of impiety and wickedness that their own vicious inclinations and corrupt affections may prompt them to; nor why they should mourn for any sin that ever they were guilty of; because infinite wisdom has permitted it, and divine justice does not immediately punish it.

If it ill becomes us to grudge men the liberty of doing whatever divine providence permits, it must doubtless be much more unbecoming and unwarrantable for us forcibly to restrain them from the exercise of that liberty; and still more so to inflict any severe punishment upon them for it. Why then should we not tamely suffer thieves and robbers to spoil us of our substance, or deprive us of our lives? Who does not see that our author's maxim would make it our duty, and the duty of all men living, magistrates and rulers not excepted, to indulge every one in the exercise of an unbounded liberty, a liberty of doing whatever he pleases? Did ever Hobbes or Spinoza teach any thing more wild and extravagant? But we must not bear too hard upon our author; for, whatever he might say on this head, he meant only to expose the pride and insolence of the popular preachers and their votaries, who are so presumptuous, and conceited of their own eminent sanctity, as, after the example of a certain ancient devotee †, to be grieved when

* Letters, p. 103.

† The Psalmist David.

they

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they see transgressors* ; and even mourn, our author will have it, murmur, because the wicked keep not God's law†. When employed in any such exercise, if we may believe him, they feed upon the transgressions of the wicked with a delicious sort of self-applause ; because they are thus reminded of their own excellency.

It may be questioned if ever any author, who pretended the least veneration for the Sacred Writings, presumed to take such liberties in ridiculing and burlesquing them, as *Palemor* has done. So audacious is this writer, that he is not afraid to represent the experiences and exercises of the godly *Psalmist* recorded by himself, under the influence and infallible direction of the Divine Spirit, as the fruit of spiritual pride, or, as he is pleased to express himself, “*the ebbings and flowings of the pride of the devotee.*” Says this Gentleman, “ Many passages in the prophets, big with comfort to the desperate, have been abused, to encourage men in this fruitless labour, namely, of squeezing at their own hearts, in order to extract thence some one or other of the qualifications included in the promises; and we may add, almost the whole book of *Psalms*, which were originally intended to set before us the sufferings of the Messiah, and the following glory, as Jesus himself declares. If we give heed to many popular treatises, we are left to understand the far greater part of the *Psalms*, as taken up with DESCRIPTIONS OF THE EBBINGS AND FLOWINGS OF THE PRIDE OF THE DEVOTEE: we are left to the poor and insipid employment of singing these in the grandest part of divine service; the most sublime matter of song being removed far

* Psal. cxix. clviii. † Psal. cxix. cxxvi.

" from our thoughts, while the very words pre-
" nant with it are in our mouths*."

It is granted, that there are several passages in the book of *Psalms*, yea some whole *Psalms*, chiefly, and others only applicable to the *Messiah*; which is all that can be gathered from the words of our Lord † that our author seems to refer to: but it is no less certain, that many of the *Psalms*, if not the far greater part of them, contain a relation of the *Psalmist's* own experiences both mournful and comfortable, together with his exercise, and a description of the inward frame and disposition of his soul, on different occasions, dictated, and left upon record by the Spirit of God himself, for the direction, comfort, and encouragement of the godly in all future ages: therefore it must necessarily follow, according to our author's hypothesis, that a very considerable part of Sacred Writ is taken up with nothing else but descriptions of the ebbings and flowings of the pride of the devotee; which have a native tendency to gratify and cherish the same noxious humour in all who read, or are any way conversant with it.

* Letters, p. 117.

† Luke xxiv. 44. Though some of the *Psalms* of *David*, and particular passages in others of them, are primarily, and some only applicable to the *Messiah*, it will never follow from thence, that all the *Psalms* are immediately and only to be understood of him. *Moses* wrote of Christ as well as *David*; but will it therefore follow, that he wrote of nothing else? — Logicians do sometimes tell us, that *a particulari ad universale non valet consequentia*; because some creatures are endued with reason, we cannot thence infer, that they are all so. *Palæmon* finding it asserted in Scripture, that some men are saints, might, according to his method of arguing on this head, infer that all are such. Our author's logic appears to be no less singular than his divinity.

It is indeed surprising; it is shocking to the last degree; that any one who claims the character of a Christian, and lover of the apostolic gospel, should have arrived at such an amazing height of impiety, as in this manner to traduce and vilify the gracious operations of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of his people, and to represent and reproach, as the ebbings and flowings of spiritual pride, not such experiences of these as some modern Christians may pretend to only, but even those which the Holy Spirit himself has been pleased to record for the instruction and comfort of believers in every future period. This is such an instance of daring impiety and blasphemy, as, I think, can hardly be met with in the writings of the most pestilent hereticks that have infested the church in any former age; though something similar to it may be found in the profane rhapsodies of some modern Infidels.

After this, those who observing our Saviour's direction * judge of the tree by its fruits, will be at no loss to form a judgment with regard to this author, and that scheme of principles, or rather hodge-podge of error, nonsense and blasphemy, which he would obtrude upon us as the ancient apostolic gospel. — The Spirit of God, when speaking of some errors which it is foretold Antichrist would introduce into the church, calls them *doctrines of devils* †; yet, for impiety and blasphemy, few of them have exceeded, or even equalled some of those tenets and opinions, which this writer has presumed to publish to the world.

But to return to the matter in hand, if there is no such thing as any *inherent grace* or *holiness*, as the letter-writer plainly insinuates, it is evident, that there can be no external acts of obedience to

* Matt. vii. 16.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1.

the law of God that he will accept, or that can be of the least advantage to men, any further than they may serve to maintain some outward decency and decorum among them : for our Lord declares, that *the tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good**. The heart must be renewed and sanctified, before the actions can be holy and acceptable to God.— But any attempt to prove this is needless, since according to the letter-writer's hypothesis, to pretend to yield external obedience to the law of God must be as absurd as to speak of any gracious habits, or an inherent principle of grace and holiness : for if any thing is pretended to, either in heart or life, by which a man may suppose himself to be distinguished from, or more holy than the most profane sinner that lives, if we may believe our author, he will not fail to consider and confide in it, as “ some distinguishing qualification beyond others for acceptance with God ;” and consequently “ it must prove the fatal means of utterly excluding him from partaking of the great and eternal benefit conveyed by the grace of God” appearing *in the atonement*, “ to all who know and understand it in simplicity †.”

Thus, according to our author, holiness, or obedience to the law of God, is so far from being of the least advantage to men, that it is far more dangerous and destructive to their souls than the most enormous transgressions can be ; as the former tends only to puff them up with a vain conceit of themselves, and fortify them in a pernicious opposition to, and contempt of the divine righteousness and grace ; while the latter serves to humble and make them sensible of their need of both. In short, if we may believe this author, the most flagitious debau-

* Matt. vii. 17, 18. and chap. xii. 33. † Letters, p. 17.

chee stands fairer for enjoying the benefit of the imputed righteousness, or being admitted to the possession of everlasting happiness, than the most eminent saint on earth. And indeed according to his principles, if we may call a number of whimsical and impertinent imaginations by that name, it must be altogether impossible for men possessed of any inherent righteousness, or gracious qualifications, to enter into the kingdom of God; because, according to him, every such thing must be accompanied with a soul-ruining contempt of the righteousness of Christ, or his bare work finished upon the cross. For any thing we can see then, the apostolic maxim, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* cannot be allowed a place in our author's system, unless it be inverted thus; *With holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

It will readily be objected, that the author of the letters is no such enemy to holiness as has been represented; because he allows, that love to God still accompanies the simple belief of the truth, and that obedience to the divine law is a necessary fruit of it; yea, further, supposes every true believer to undergo such a change as is in Scripture called *conversion, regeneration, new creation, or the new creature, &c.* whence he receives a new instinct, that prompts and inclines him to exercise himself in the labour of charity and acts of self-denied obedience to the divine law*; and, what is more still, asserts, "that they who have made the best profession of the faith are still to be called to repentance, still to be put in mind of the necessity of conversion."

It is granted he does so; but what other inference can be drawn from such assertions, compared with those other passages of his letters we have al-

* Letters, p. 412, 413, 414, &c.

ready taken notice of, but that in relation to this, as well as every other point he treats of, he overthrows his own hypothesis, and manifestly contradicts himself? Does he not often insinuate, that if any man, whether he be a believer or unbeliever it is all one, imagines he is possessed of any good qualification that may distinguish him from the most profane wretch that lives, he will not fail to glory in it, as, at least, some ground of acceptance with God, in which case Christ shall profit him nothing? Is it not an undoubted *maxim* with this Gentleman, “that every man’s pride is equal to “his worth?” so that if in any condition, that is, either before or after conversion, he can be supposed to be possessed of any grace, or good qualification, that may serve to distinguish him from the most openly profane, he will doubtless be conscious of it, and make it subservient to his pride, or, in other words, make a righteousness and a Saviour of it?

What can be this author’s intention, then, in alledging, or at least allowing and taking it for granted, that sinners must undergo a change to the better? that they must be converted, renewed, and born again; that they must love God, keep his commandments, and exercise themselves in the self-denied labour of charity; — and that otherwise they cannot be saved? Does not all this suppose, that something besides the bare work of Christ, which was long since finished, is necessary to our actual enjoying the benefit of the divine righteousness, though not as a ground of acceptance with God? Yet, is not this the very sentiment which he pretends to find fault with in his opponents, and for which he so often rails against them in the most indecent and scurrilous manner?

They

They * never taught the necessity of any thing besides the righteousness of Christ as a *ground* of justification, though they constantly affirmed, that there can be no saving faith, and consequently no *actual interest* in the imputed righteousness, or enjoyment of the benefit of it, till there is a change wrought upon the heart of a sinner by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit; and that holiness and obedience to the divine law are still the fruit of faith.

Now, does not *Palemon*, upon occasion, maintain the necessity of all these in his own way? What can be more senseless and impertinent, then, than for him to say of his antagonists, “ that they do not understand how the bare word of faith or Christ’s death alone can give them peace with God, without some pious requisite or other; which they secretly hope to attain, or presume they have already acquired ? ” “ Some secret notion,” says he, “ of the necessity of some difference betwixt themselves and others is lodged in their minds along with the knowledge they have of the truth ; ” that is, in plain terms, they suppose, that *sanctification* by the Spirit of Christ is as necessary to salvation as *justification* through his righteousness. Yet they maintained the necessity of this for no other end and purpose, than he himself supposes it necessary that the gospel, or the simple truth, be *received* into the *conscience*, so as to become a *new instinct*, disposing a man to love God, and yield obedience to his commandments.

* Namely, those whom he appears to bear the greatest ill-will to; such as, Mr. Marshall, Boston, Erskines, &c.

† Letters, p. 305.

The admitting of this into the *conscience*, for he will hardly allow it to reach the *heart*, so as to furnish the soul with new principles of action, new inclinations and affections, must certainly be something different from the bare work of Christ finished upon the cross ; yet this he acknowledges to be necessary both to salvation and justification. Do not the censures then which he passes upon his antagonists, for teaching that *conviction*, *regeneration*, and *sanctification*, are necessary, not as *grounds* of acceptance with God, but in order to our *actual enjoying* of the benefit of the divine righteousness, fall equally upon himself ? Yea, it is evident that he carries the point relating to personal qualifications, a great deal further than ever they did, when, as we have already made appear, he maintains, that these are necessary to lay a *foundation* for a personal claim to the favour of God, and any solid belief, or persuasion of the remission of sins and eternal salvation through Christ.

But it is to no purpose to reason with one who either knows not or cares not what he says ; and therefore we shall not at present take any further notice of his vain jangling and impertinent rhapsodies on this head, but pass on to the consideration of the next article.

ARTICLE XVIII.

IT is absurd to suppose that unbelievers, or men in an unregenerate state, ought to pray for the Holy Spirit to help them to the exercise of faith, or any other grace: and believers have no occasion to pray for his illumination, direction, or assistance, in any case; they being already furnished with a set of principles sufficient to direct them in every good path, or how to form their hearts and lives suitably to what the Lord requires of them; and being able of themselves, without any foreign or supernatural assistance, to perform what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

REMARKS.

THE author of the letters gives abundant evidence of his disaffection to every thing that has the least appearance of serious religion or practical godliness, particularly to the duty of prayer; whence, I think, it is manifest, that whatever spirit we may suppose him to have been influenced by in forming and propagating his extraordinary scheme of principles, it could not be the Holy Spirit: for he is *the Spirit of grace and supplications**; and therefore cannot, without the highest impiety, be thought to teach, or prompt any man to ridicule and vilify the exercise of prayer; which, as speaking in the Scriptures, he always recommends and enjoins, as a duty in-

* Zech. xii. 10. Rom. viii. 15, 26. Gal. iv. 6.

cumbent upon all; and, as dwelling in believers, inclines to, and assists them in the performance of it.

Our Lord indeed reproved the Pharisees for praying hypocritically, and making their prayers subservient to their pride and other corrupt affections; but *Palæmon* seems to condemn the exercise of prayer altogether. I do not remember any one passage in all his voluminous performance wherein he teaches or supposes, that it is a duty incumbent either on saints or sinners, believers or unbelievers; but there are several in which he ridicules it as practised by the former, and affirms in effect that the latter ought never to attempt it. The fervent and humble supplications of the royal psalmist for farther degrees of spiritual light, knowledge, strength and comfort, communion with God, and conformity to him, he represents as the ebbings and flowings of spiritual pride: and, for the same reason, I think, all the prayers of the saints recorded in scripture must be viewed in the same light. And if we may believe our author, those who are at any time found instant in prayer for spiritual mercies and blessings, renewing and sanctifying grace, with further degrees of both, are only exercised in pious wrestlings and waitings for a good conceit of themselves*."

What *Palæmon* assigns as a reason why it must be accounted absurd to exhort unbelievers to pray for the Holy Spirit to help them to faith, will equally serve to prove, that they ought never to pray at all; at least, for any spiritual blessing. His words are these: "The popular doctrine supposes, "that unbelievers may be seriously engaged in "praying for the Holy Spirit to help them to

* Letters, p. 73.

" faith,

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" faith, and exhorts them accordingly; which is
" as absurd as to suppose that a man may be de-
" sirous of being influenced by the spirit of a
" truth, which at present he neither believes nor
" loves. For I reckon it must be granted, that
" no man loves the gospel before he believes it.*

—I presume it will as readily be granted, that no man can love or have any due esteem for wisdom, or the saving knowledge of God and divine things, before he obtains it; yet I think it will not be refused, that the Holy Spirit himself speaking in the Scriptures exhorts those who are as yet destitute of it, to seek it diligently, and pray for it with the utmost fervency and earnestness. If it is not so, how shall we understand the following passage? *If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searcest for her, as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom, &c.* †

I need not tell the reader, that the sacred writings abound with directions and encouragements of a like nature given to unbelievers as well as others, and sometimes addressed to them in an especial manner ‡. Now, if from these and the like instructions dictated and directed by the Spirit of God himself, we should argue as the letter-writer does from the same and similar exhortations given to unbelieving sinners by the teachers of what he calls the popular doctrine, what must be the inference? To express it would be shocking;—to admit it would be impious.

* Letters, p. 360. † Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. 1 Isa. lv. 6, 7. Amos v. 6, 7, 8. Jam. i. 5. Actviii. 21, 22, &c.

I think - it will not be denied, that men in an unregenerate state can have as little true desire and esteem for spiritual blessings as they have genuine love to the truth : according to our author's method of reasoning, then, it must be absurd to suppose that they ought to pray for any such, and exhort them accordingly. Perhaps he may allow, that it is their duty so far to acknowledge their great Creator, preserver and benefactor, as to ask temporal mercies and blessings from him ; which we may suppose them to do seriously, as they know the value of them, and do really desire them. But should they pray for these only without being in the least solicitous about the concerns of their souls, or desiring mercy for them, they would pray for what could only tend to harden them in a course of sin and rebellion against God.

Their petitions in this case would have much the same import with these which the author of *Theron and Aspasio*, very pertinently puts in the mouths of those idle, dissolute vagrants, who, declining honest labour, traverse the country, and most frequently those places where their true character and circumstances are least known, that they may have the more liberty to perpetrate their villanies*. — The import of such petitions would plainly be this: ‘ Lord, I cannot go on in my present iniquitous and wicked course unless thou wilt administer some kindly pernicious assistance. For Christ’s sake therefore assist me to dishonour thee, and to persist in the way that leads to eternal destruction : as for spiritual mercies and blessings, I cannot ask them from thee, because I do neither love nor desire them ; therefore I only request

* *Theron and Aspasio*, p. 400. edit. 4.

‘ from

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‘ from thee such a portion of temporal good things
‘ as will be sufficient to support, and keep me easy
‘ in a state and course of sin.’

But as it can never be warrantable to address the throne of grace with such petitions as these, or to ask any temporal mercy from God without requesting at the same time, that he may enable by his grace to use it to his glory; and *Palæmon* will not allow, that it is the duty of unconverted sinners to pray for any spiritual blessing because they know not the worth of it, and can have no suitable desire to obtain it; according to his hypothesis they ought never to pray at all. The amount of his reasoning is, in short, this: Unbelievers cannot be supposed capable of praying aright; therefore it is absurd to exhort them to pray at all: and for the same reason it must also be absurd to exhort them to perform any other duty, or suppose that they are under any obligation so to do; for doubtless it cannot be absurd to exhort men to do their duty.

As our author supposes it would be absurd to exhort unbelievers to pray for themselves, he also plainly insinuates, that it is equally unwarrantable, foolish, and ridiculous, for others to pray for them. Accordingly we find him making himself merry with the practice of some famous preachers, who, he says, “ when attending criminals to execution usually instruct them to pray for a new heart, strength to act, faith, &c.”

If it is unwarrantable to instruct unbelieving sinners to pray for divine grace to change and renew their hearts, and determine them to believe on the name of the Son of God, that they may have everlasting life; to address and suppli-

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cate the throne of grace in their behalf for any such thing must be no less so. And if it is unlawful, or idle, to pray for the renewing influence of the divine Spirit, or grace to make them understand and believe the report of the gospel concerning Christ, to dying malefactors who are supposed to be, as yet in a state of sin and under the power of unbelief, I think it will be hard to find any warrant to pray for them at all. For to request that their sins may be pardoned, without praying for grace to help them to faith—would be as absurd as to suppose, that a sinner may be pardoned while he persists in his unbelief, in despising and rejecting the divine righteousness; or that he may be justified before he believes.

The letter-writer perhaps would tell a sinner in such circumstances, to the best of his ability, what the gospel says about Christ, and suppose him able enough of himself, without any supernatural assistance, to understand and make a suitable application thereof, or allow it a place in his conscience in such a manner as to be justified thereby. I believe *Pelagius* would have done the same: for, as one justly observes, “to place all grace in outward doctrine,” or maintain that the word *grace* in Scripture never signifies any more than *objective grace*, is mere *Pelagianism**.

But we might ask the letter-writer, is the *new heart* necessary or not? If not, why is it promised? Shall we think that God promises any grace or blessing to men which they have no need of, no occasion for? If it is necessary, and promised too, why may not every one pray for it? Does not the promise itself necessarily imply, that it

* *Answer to Mr. William Sherlock*, by Edward Polhill, Esq; p. 281.

is their duty to do so, and also afford great encouragement to the practice of this duty? This extraordinary writer perhaps will tell us, that this, as all other promises of the gospel, is made to believers only. But it is easy to reply, that if they are believers, they are already possessed of the *new heart*; and therefore the import of the promise could only be this: ‘*A new heart, which is a blessing truly precious, inestimable, and absolutely necessary, will I give you; yet you have no occasion for any such gift to be made to you, being possessed of it already.*’ Cursed be that impiety in any of the sons of men that would impute such folly to their Maker, and represent the Almighty as thus trifling with his creatures in matters of the last importance.

Though *Palæmon* supposes it absurd to imagine, that unbelievers either can, or ought, to be at any time seriously engaged in the exercise of prayer, and to exhort them accordingly; it might have been presumed, that he would at least allow that it is a duty incumbent on believers; and that they ought, according to many scriptural exhortations, to be frequent and fervent in their addresses to a throne of grace for divine illumination, and grace to direct, quicken and strengthen them in their Christian work and warfare. The saints we read of in Scripture, both under the Old and New Testament, we are sure were frequently thus employed; and the word of God abounds with exhortations and encouragements to the practice of this duty. But if we attentively examine our author’s new scheme of Christianity, which indeed is nothing but old *Pelagianism*, with a number of other antiquated errors appearing in a new dress, we shall find, that, far from supposing that believers are under any obligation to perform this duty, it wholly excludes the exercise

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ercise of prayer, as needless and unprofitable, even in regard to them : for he supposes that his believers are immediately furnished with such a new principle of knowledge or reasoning as is sufficient, without any farther illumination or supernatural influence, to direct in every good path. Accordingly, *Jonathan*, his supposed convert, is taught to speak in the following manner. “ I do not set out from “ conjectures, to inquire after truth ; but I set out “ with the light of undoubted truth, to observe “ what path it opens for me to walk in. I do not “ set out from human maxims or presumptions, to “ inquire how I shall form a God to myself ; but “ I set out from heavenly truth, stamped with the “ divine character, to inquire how I shall form my “ heart and life suitably to it. I do not set out up- “ the inquiry, What shall I do to placate the Di- “ vine Majesty ? or, as the phrase is, How I shall “ make up my peace with God ? But I set out “ from the persuasion, that God is just in justifying “ the ungodly, to inquire, what service he has for “ me, — to prove what is the good, and accepta- “ ble, and perfect will of God. — All my reli- “ gious principles and practices are so many infe- “ rences from the afore-mentioned fact — *.”

After a few more passages, describing somewhat more particularly the excellency and sufficiency, I might have said *all-sufficiency*, of this new principle of knowledge or reason, he concludes thus : “ However foolish then my rule of faith and prac- “ tice may appear in the eyes of the *wise*, and how- “ ever weak in the eyes of the *devout* †, I find my-

* Letters, p. 76, 77.

† Those who suppose the absolute need of any such foreign aid as divine illumination and supernatural grace, to direct and assist them in the path of duty, or course of Christian obedience.

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" self kept in countenance by the apostolic maxim,
" *The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the
weakness of God is stronger than men.*" Thus we see
Palæmon's convert lets out, and struts abroad, vaunting
of his new principle of knowledge or reason
as all-sufficient to direct him in the path of duty
and obedience — without acknowledging the least
need of divine teaching, or the inward illumination
of the Holy Ghost: — for every thing of that kind
the letter-writer disclaims, as belonging to what he
calls the " *counterfeit grace,*" or " *that divine affla-*
tus, influence, or energy, by which it was supposed
philosophers and heroes of old became good and
great men." So much does *Jonathan* pride himself
in his new principle of reason, that it would seem,
after being once possessed of it, he imagined he had
no need, with the *Psalmist* and other *bot enthusiasts*,
to pray that the Lord would open his eyes, instruct
him more and more out of his law, and *lead him in*
a plain path. His new method of philosophizing on
the *fact*, or the *resurrection*, &c. and its *import*, did
in his view plainly supersede the necessity of any
petitions of that kind; the need of instruction by the
divine law, as well as of illumination by the divine
Spirit *.

After

* Our young convert would make us believe, that
after he was once furnished with his new principle of
knowledge or reasoning, on reading the New Testa-
ment he came immediately to have as distinct a percep-
tion, and as full a view of all the sublime doctrines of
Christianity contained therein, as a young student of
good parts can have of any mathematical proposition,
after it has been clearly demonstrated to him by a skil-
ful master. But *Jonathan* was a Gentleman of a fine
genius. Yet, as the common saying is, he appears to
have known it too well; and so might be apt to view

him

After *Paul* was converted he was found praying : *Palæmon*'s convert does not shew the least inclination to this exercise ; but, on the contrary, turns it into matter of ridicule, as being the favourite employment of some religious *devotees* and pious *enthusiasts*, and peculiar to them, but no way becoming such an acute reasoner as himself ; though perhaps for the sake of decency, and some other obvious reasons, he might still keep up some outward form of it. — But though *Jonathan* had been so happy as to discover a new kind of philosophy, which he found to be all-sufficient to enlighten his mind, direct him in the path of righteousness, purify his heart from all evil and corrupt affections, and incline him to every good work, it might have been expected that he would, at least, have acknowledged the necessity of some divine and supernatural assistance for enabling him to yield acceptable obedience to the will of God ; especially as he now professed himself to be a follower of *Jesus*, who declares that *without him*, without the gracious influence and special assistance of his Holy Spirit, even his own disciples *can do nothing**. But it appears *Jonathan* was of another mind. Being now sincerely well-inclined, he seems to have made no doubt, but he was sufficiently able to do that which is lawful and right †, without any such foreign assis-

his own attainments in too favourable a light, taking a number of vain speculations, foreign enough to the doctrine of the New Testament, for that true spiritual knowledge of divine things that can be attained only by divine illumination and the supernatural teaching of the Holy Spirit ; which differs as much from a merely speculative knowledge of divine truths, as reason does from mere sensation, or saving faith from them both.

* John xv. 5.

† Letters, p. 91.

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tance as the renewed, and strengthening influence of the Holy Ghost. His tutor *Palæmon* had doubtless taught him, that he, had no reason either from Scripture or experience to conclude that there is “any impotency in man to do good, “ but what arises from his aversion to it; or “any readiness in him to do evil, but what arises “from his love to it *.” The apostle *Paul* would have taught him another lesson; for, says that inspired writer, *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not* †: but from what we can learn of *Jonathan*’s character, it appears, that he inclined rather to imbibe the self-elating doctrine, and assume the haughty airs of the acute *Palæmon*, than commence a disciple of the humble and self-denied apostle; who notwithstanding his sincerity, which we doubt if *Palæmon* himself will be so hardy as to deny, too often found reason to complain of a woful impotency to do

* Letters, p. 92.

† Rom. vii. 18. If *Palæmon*’s notion, namely, that no man who is sincerely well-inclined can be conscious of, or labour under any inability to do good, is allowed to be just, we must grant at the same time, that the apostle in this passage has given us, a very false account of his own experience. For, if we may believe our author, his complaints of impotency to do good could only arise from his aversion to it, or the want of a sincere inclination to do it: and if *Paul* had been a popular preacher, *Palæmon* from his own words could easily have proved him a hypocrite, and made it appear, that he did grossly prevaricate, by pretending, that to *will* was present with him, or that he was sincerely well-inclined, when he *did not* that good he *would*; and much more when he *did* the evil he *alleges he would not*, or had a sincere aversion to. Rom. vii. 19.

good,

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good, and to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death**!

Having now had a sufficient view of the absurdity and impiety of *Palæmon's* doctrine on this head, which is plainly refuted almost in every page of the Inspired Writings; at least in all those passages which injoin, recommend or furnish us with any motives and encouragements to the exercise of prayer; we shall proceed to consider what he has next to offer as part of his ancient apostolic gospel: and if we carefully examine his letters, we shall find the following article to be no inconsiderable branch of that new scheme of doctrine which he so confidently dignifies with that name.

A R T I C L E XIX.

A Believer has no occasion to consider himself as being under any obligation to yield obedience to the divine law; nor can it be of any advantage to him in regulating his practice and conversation.

R E M A R K S.

I Do not remember that *Palæmon* has anywhere in express terms denied the obligation of the divine law with regard to believers: that would have been too plain dealing; but I do not find that in any passage of his letters he has clearly asserted it. Had this been any article of his creed, I apprehend it would have been very necessary for him to have declared so much, and taken some pains to vindi-

* Rom. vii. 24.

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cate and establish this important truth ; especially, as he has treated almost every thing that has the least semblance, or appearance of serious religion and godliness, with manifest contempt ; so strained the point relating to the *divine sovereignty*, and given such an account of the *divine grace* appearing in the *atonement*, as would lead one to think, that the revelation of that grace was intended wholly to supersede the necessity of any personal holiness and obedience to the law of God, considered even as a rule of duty to believers.

Another thing which gives too much ground to call in question the soundness of our author's principles on this head, is, that he shews abundance of zeal, or rather spite, against that judicious divine Mr. Marshall, for no other reason, so far as I can perceive, but because that excellent writer, in his *treatise on sanctification*, so strenuously urges the necessity of holiness and obedience to the commands of God ; not in order to justification, but as what the divine law indispensably requires of all creatures capable of moral government, in all possible circumstances, or, to use the words of that author, " as having an inseparable dependance upon the holiness of the will of God, and an indispensable establishment thereby." After taking notice of the scope of the valuable treatise above-mentioned, which is to instruct the reader concerning the nature and means of performing such obedience to the law of God as he requires and will accept of, and to shew that without faith, union with Christ, and the inhabitation and special influence of his Spirit, none can obey the law acceptably, the letter-writer is pleased to say, " According to this author, then, Christ is not the end of the law for righteousness, but the best means one can make use of for enabling him to perform that righteousness which

" which

“ which is the end of the law * ;” he should have added in order to justification, to obtain the favour of God and a right to eternal life; for so he would have us to understand Mr. *Marshall*. But to have charged that author with holding or endeavouring to establish such a sentiment in plain terms, would have been too open, and would have divested his own malevolent insinuation of that deceitful ambiguity by which he still endeavours to impose upon his injudicious and ignorant readers. If he had no intention to charge Mr. *Marshall* with maintaining any such erroneous notion, it is evident, that his quarrel with him could only be for asserting the necessity of holiness and obedience to the divine law, on any account whatsoever.

There is ground to think it is for holding this sentiment, that *Palæmon* has treated that excellent author, and many other valuable writers, in such a scurrilous manner. It appears to give him no little uneasiness when he finds any writer urging the practice, shewing the necessity, and explaining the nature of holiness, and that obedience which God requires of man. Thus, what Mr. *Marshall* has taught and attempted this way he scornfully, though most impertinently, censures in the following manner. “ Why all this round-about course? Why should we seek to repress any man’s impetuosity to fulfil the law, who already knows the matter and reason of his duty, and is already acquainted with the nature and excellency of the duties of the law? Why should we retard his course, by intangling him in a labyrinth about the use of means, seeing he may die before he has learned to use them aright, and so never reach his desired end? Methinks it would be much better to di-

* Letters, p. 430.

“ rect

" rect him to study *Ezekiel*, chap. xxxiii. where he
" where he will find, that all well-disposed per-
" sons have as much security for their happiness, as
" the divine oath can give — *."

I confess I am at a loss to understand the force of this reasoning, if it is not intended to prove, that all exhortations to the practice of holiness and obedience to the divine law, are needless and superfluous. Perhaps it may be alledged, that *Palemon* censures Mr. *Marshall* only for directing exhortations of this kind to unbelievers. But though they are by Mr. *Marshall*, as they are every where in the Sacred Writings, addressed to unbelievers as well as others, that judicious author never supposes, that unbelievers while they remain such, can perform any acceptable obedience to the law of God, or indeed have any suitable inclination, propensity, or desire to do so. It is the very scope of his book to evince the contrary.

The holiness and obedience which Mr. *Marshall* does every where in his book recommend, and urge the practice of, are the very same with what the law of God requires of all believers; which are not, in any respect, a cause or condition of justification, but consequential thereto; and therefore it must be that obedience to the divine law which flows from faith and union with Christ, and not that legal, mercenary obedience which unbelievers may attempt in order to justification, that the letter-writer shews so much disaffection to. In short, the scope of that celebrated treatise on sanctification writ by Mr. *Marshall*, is to teach, that without faith in Jesus Christ no sinner can yield acceptable obedience to the law of God; that obedience to that law is what believers are still under a necessary obligation

* Letters, p. 431.

to perform ; and, in fine, that faith in Christ is the root and principle of all true holiness and obedience to the divine law.

As to the first and last of these positions, I presume, the letter-writer will not pretend to differ with Mr. *Marshall*: for he tells us, he thinks *Aſſo* will readily agree with him in saying, that without faith it is impossible to please God, or that nothing is well-pleasing to God about any man till he believes. And near the beginning of his *sixth* letter he informs us he is about to consider faith as a principle of life and action; doubtless he means that it is the principle of all acceptable obedience to God. I cannot conceive, then, what it is in Mr. *Marshall's* doctrine that could awaken his zeal, and inflame it to such a degree of resentment against that worthy author and his performance, if it is not his teaching that believers are still under a *necessary obligation* to yield obedience to the divine law.

We suppose it is for the same reason, that, in a note at the bottom of p. 455. he calls those excellent treatises that have been writ with a design to evince the necessity and explain the nature of sanctification and evangelical holiness, so many volumes of nonsense. There, after glossing on a few texts of Scripture in his own way, this Gentleman is pleased to say, " If we attend to these passages of Scripture, we will readily be disintangled from many volumes of *nonsense* that have been writ by many famous preachers on sanctification."

We wish our author had told us who these famous preachers are, that have been so unprofitably employed, and what these doctrines or sentiments are which he is pleased to treat with so much contempt. As I know of none who have writ more fully concerning the nature and necessity of sanctification, than the judicious Dr. *Owen* and Mr.

Mar-

Marshall, I am ready to think, that *Palæmon*, in making the remark above-mentioned, had the treatises wrote by these eminent divines on this subject, and others of a like nature chiefly in his eye ; yea from the censure he passes on writings of this kind without distinction, we are at liberty to conclude, that in his opinion all that ever was writ concerning the nature and necessity of sanctification, is idle and nonsensical.

Does he then positively deny that there is, or can be any such thing as *sanctification*? This indeed might be inferred, and will necessarily follow from some of his extravagant assertions ; yea, without supposing it, I apprehend, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to make any tolerable sense of a great part of his book. But the absurdity of such a sentiment is too glaring, to be openly avowed by any who would be thought to have the least regard for the Inspired Writings ; therefore *Palæmon* seems to allow a kind of sanctification ; but then it is such as he tells us springs wholly and only from the *bare truth*, which is so much set at nought by the popular preachers ; that is, it is such a sanctification as has neither the Divine Spirit for its author or efficient, nor the divine law for its rule, measure and standard. For as he has treated the whole work of the Holy Spirit, in the regeneration and sanctification of believers, with the utmost contempt, he supposes his believers to be furnished with such a new principle of knowledge or reasoning, as is sufficient to conduct them in all their inquiries about truth and duty, and in the whole course of their obedience to God ; and he intimates, that ALL their religious principles and practices are only so many inferences from the *resurrection of Jesus*.

It is not the divine law, then, but that new principle of knowledge and reasoning which *Palæmon's* converts

converts are possessed of as soon as they commence believers, that is the measure and standard of their obedience to God, or the rule of their religious practice. Such is the all-sufficiency of this new principle, as described by the letter-writer, that one who is endued with it can have no need to study the divine law, or inquire into the mind of God revealed in his written word, that he may know his duty in particular cases; for he has already acquired a set of notions, or an internal fund of knowledge and reasoning, whereby he is enabled, on all occasions, to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

It is well known to what heights of extravagance and impiety the people called *Quakers* have been sometimes carried by their internal principle of knowledge and reason, which they call the *Spirit* or, the *light* within them: and some deluded *sectsaries* have been unawares drawn into many disorderly practices, and at last encouraged to gratify the most unruly passions and criminal inclinations; yea, to abandon themselves to all kinds of licentiousness, by supposing that theunction or internal teaching of the *Spirit* may well enough supply the need of, and is intended to supersede all outward instruction by the written Word. I am afraid, that *Palemon's* converts, by magnifying and trusting too much to that new principle of knowledge or reasoning he speaks of, may be in some hazard of falling into the like snares; especially as he has no where instructed them concerning the obligation of the divine law, and the necessity of making its precepts, contained in the Sacred Writings, the rule of their obedience and religious practice.

What makes me the more readily entertain some suspicion of this kind, is, that I find believers of our author's stamp discovering a peculiar fondness for,

and valuing themselves chiefly on the performance of such acts of obedience and self-denial as are nowhere enjoined or authorised by the Scriptures, but are only so many instances of voluntary humility, which they think fit to practise and impose upon their adherents, as far as may be consistent with their own ease, and reputation among their admirers. And, which is a plain evidence that they themselves do not apprehend, that all their prescriptions and rules of this kind are binding by virtue of any divine precept, I understand, they can either urge the observation of them, or alter and drop them, as they judge most expedient, or as may best suit the inclinations and interests of those they have an immediate connection with. And indeed it is not to be thought but men will in this manner make free with all such prescriptions and rules of action as they frame to themselves, without any warrant from the divine Word.

How *Palæmon* and his brethren stand affected with regard to those voluntary acts of obedience, self-denial and mortification, which they have thought fit to impose upon themselves, we may easily learn from what he says of them, p. 441. What veneration he has for the precepts of the divine law, is evident from the scope and style of his letters, and the spirit which breathes through the whole; particularly from those passages in which he makes the duties and exercises of religion, which are undoubtedly prescribed and enjoined in the Word of God, a subject of taillery and ridicule.—The disrespect, scorn and contempt, with which he has treated some whom he ought to have esteemed and honoured as fathers; the false accusations he has brought against them, almost in every page of his book, together with his malevolent attempts to murder their character, and pour contempt upon their memory,

make it evident, at least, that he did not apprehend he and his votaries were bound to any scrupulous observation of the *fifth* and *ninth* commandments of the moral law. Such are the effects of *Palæmon's* new principle of knowledge or reasoning! Such the temper of mind that accompanies it!

Jonathan, *Palæmon's* convert, vaunts so much of his new principle of knowledge or reasoning in the very entrance upon a religious life, that, methinks, he seems rather to assume the supercilious airs of a haughty philosopher and proud reasoner, than to shew the self-denial of a humble Christian. However, he is pleased to tell us, “that though all his “religious principles and practices are so many in-“ferences from the fact,” of Christ’s resurrection; “yet he has no ground to value himself as a rea-“soner even on this new footing.” For, says he, “I could find no satisfactory meaning at all in that “fact, till I was first taught it by the illiterate Ga-“lileans. And, what is more, I can deduce no in-“ference from thence, till I be first taught it by “one or other of the inspired witnesses. But when “I hear them displaying the manifold wisdom of “God from that source, I perceive a wonderful “propriety and force in the whole of their reason-“ing*.”

We may well wonder how *Jonathan* came to attain such a degree of sagacity as to understand the testimony of the inspired witnesses, all that the apostles declare concerning Christ, and be able to perceive a wonderful force and propriety in the whole of their reasoning, without the inward teaching or illumination of the divine Spirit. He must certainly have been a man of parts, and uncommon penetration, that could thus readily perceive the

* Letters, p. 77.

things;

things of the Spirit of God, the deep things of God, without any enlightening work of the Spirit of God upon his mind and heart. The apostle Paul tells us, that *the things of God knoweth no man*, but he to whom the Spirit of God is pleased to reveal them, doubtless, by such an internal work of illumination as is peculiar to the chosen of God; and that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; *that they are foolishness to him*; and that he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned*: but it seems Jonathan is, at least, one instance to the contrary.

After all, methinks, there is some ground to suspect the truth of Jonathan's conversion; because, when shewing us how he attained to the knowledge of divine things, he has entirely forgot one thing, which an inspired writer supposes all true believers will have an humble sense of, and readily acknowledge to the praise of sovereign grace, namely, that God has revealed those things which belong to their peace by his Spirit, or by an internal work of divine illumination upon their minds. For any thing I can see, this young convert, by vaunting so much of his new principle of knowledge and reason, and taking occasion from thence to glory over serious, humble Christians, who are so blind and ignorant as to find an absolute need of the inward teaching and illumination of the divine Spirit, for enabling them to understand, or form any just conceptions of the things of God, however clearly revealed in his word, shews himself to be rather a true son of the haughty Pelagius, than an humble disciple of Jesus, who has declared, that not he who hears and learns of the inspired witnesses only, but he who *bath heard and learned of the Father*, namely, by the internal

* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12, 14.

and supernatural teaching of his Holy Spirit, *cometh unto him* *.

But what I chiefly intended to have taken notice of in *Jonathan's* account of his conversion, is that immediately on his commencing a believer and a reasoner on the fact of Christ's resurrection and its import, he supposes himself to be furnished with such a principle of knowledge or reasoning as *suffit* plainly supercede all necessity of any instruction by the divine law as a rule of duty and obedience. For if the principle aforesaid opens a path for him to walk in, and enables him to prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God; I do not see what obligation he can be under, or what need he can have, to learn his duty or any part of it from the moral law; or to regulate his practice thereby.

It must be owned, that *Jonathan* professes to have some veneration for the divine law; for thou he expresses himself: “ By seeing what a righteous counsel was requisite to honour it, and at what we expect every the least transgression of it behov-

* John vi. 45. It is evident, that the hearing and learning of the Father which our Saviour here speaks of, cannot be understood of that manifestation and knowledge of the truth which is attained by *externa/revelation*, or the testimony and doctrine of the inspired witnesses only; for many, yea the far greater part of those who are privileged with the outward revelation of the gospel, never come unto the Son or truly believe on him: it must therefore be understood of that *internal manifestation and knowledge of the truth which accompany the supernatural and internal teaching of the Holy Spirit*; for those and those only who in this manner bear and laye of the Father, *come unto the Son*. See John xvii. 6. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Acts xxvi. 18. 1 Cor. ii. 12. Gal. i. 16. &c.

" ved to be expiated, I am led to hold every pre-
" cept of it more sacred than ever I did before. I
" know that I cannot disregard any precept of it
" without at the same time disregarding the reveal-
" ed righteousness. I consider the perfect law, the
" law that requires godliness and humanity in per-
" fection, as the sacred and invariable rule of cor-
" respondence with God."

This is all very well said, unless we may except the last clause of the sentence last quoted, wherein *Jonathan* asserts, that the perfect law is the invariable rule of correspondence with God; which, I confess, I am at some loss to know the meaning of, though I shall not stay to examine it at present: but still there is not a word here or anywhere else in the letters on, *Thess.*, &c. that I can recollect, asserting the obligation of that law as a rule of obedience to believers, or as being any way necessary to instruct them concerning the nature and extent of that obedience which God requires of them. The simple truth, or rather their own inferences from the resurrection of Jesus, both in *Matthew's* narrative and elsewhere, in the letters, are accounted sufficient both to bind to, and instruct them concerning the whole extent of their obedience to God. Accordingly, to the passage already quoted *Jonathan* immediately subjoins the following words. — " On this side the grave I cannot come before God at any time, and say Above no sin, yet the TRUTH both binds and encourages me to aim at no less than perfection." It is observable, that he says not the LAW, but the TRUTH binds him to perfection.

As I cannot approve of the ungenerous disposition, nor would imitate the practice of those who make a man an offender for a word, or wrest a particular passage in the writings of any author to a meaning quite contrary to his avowed principles, I should not

have taken any notice of this mode of expression, which perhaps might bear a favourable construction, and be understood in a sound sense, had not *Palæmon* elsewhere given broad hints importing, that the *simple truth*, as he calls it, is all-sufficient to sanctification as well as justification; so as plainly to supersede any necessity of observing the moral law as the rule and measure of that obedience which God requires of his people.

This notion, I apprehend, may be of dangerous consequence, as it has a manifest tendency to divert the minds of those who embrace it from any proper attention to the divine law as the only rule of duty and obedience, and encourage them to put their own fond imaginations and perverse reasonings in the room of it: which, as we formerly observed, has led some into very hurtful and dangerous snares; and we are afraid has not had much better effects in regard to the letter-writer and his brethren; who, if I am rightly informed, shew abundantly more zeal for their own arbitrary prescriptions, than they do for the practice of those duties that are evidently commanded in the divine law. The many wild and extravagant imaginations we meet with in the letters on *Theron*, &c. are a sufficient specimen of those inferences which they pretend to deduce from the *resurrection of Jesus*. Their new principle of knowledge has directed them to such a method of reasoning, as I am apt to think, may be improved to vindicate any notions, and palliate any practice that may be most suited to their own inclinations and humours; yea to keep them some way in countenance while engaged in the most virulent opposition to the most precious and important truths of the gospel, and the whole practice of godliness.

Our author and his votaries may boast of their new principle of knowledge or reasoning as much as they

they please ; but we hope all sober Christians will content themselves with observing the *ancient RULE* which the Spirit of God remits them to, as that by which all tenets, opinions, doctrines and practices, are to be examined. *To the LAW and to the TESTIMONY : if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is no light in them**.

When Jonathan tells us, that ALL his religious principles and practices are only so many inferences from the fact of Christ's resurrection, methinks, the assertion is somewhat odd. If he means, that all the *credenda* and *agenda* of Christianity ; all the truths which Christians ought to believe, and all the duties they are bound to perform to God and towards one another, are only so many deductions from the fact aforesaid, as stated and explained by the apostles or the inspired witnesses, the necessary consequence of which must be readily perceived by every believer of the gospel ; the thought, I believe, is entirely new, and, I confess, far beyond my comprehension.

That the *resurrection of Jesus* is a fact in which all the capital doctrines of Christianity do as it were meet and concenter ; that it is in some respect the foundation of, and does effectually secure all the spiritual privileges which believers do either enjoy here in this world, or expect to be possessed of hereafter in the other world ; and, in fine, that what is declared in the New Testament concerning this fact and its import, does contain the very substance and marrow of the whole gospel, may be easily admitted : but that ever the inspired witnesses attempted thence to deduce *all* revealed truths which men ought to believe, and all the duties which God requires of them ; as if the certainty of all the for-

* *Isai. viii. 20.*

mer, and the obligation of all the latter, might easily, and must necessarily be inferred from the resurrection of Jesus, is what I think no sober man will alledge. But it seems Jonathan has learned to rant with his master.

Before I leave this head, I shall only add, that I meet with one assertion in the *Letters on Theron, &c.* which, if taken by itself, might seem to supersede all the objections I have made to Palæmon's insinuations with regard to the divine law as being of little or no advantage to a believer in regulating his practice and conversation; and it is as follows: "The gospel was never intended to make void the law in any respect; yea it establishes the law on all sides, in the strongest manner *." The sentiment is extremely just and truly apostolic; but if Palæmon had understood it in the sense of the apostles, and kept it still in his view, we should not have found in his letters so many loose insinuations tending evidently to vacate the obligation of the divine law with respect both to believers and unbelievers. We have already heard him giving broad hints importing, if they can be supposed to have any meaning at all, that unbelievers ought never to attempt, or be in the least solicitous about yielding obedience to any divine command, and that believers are furnished with such a principle of knowledge or reasoning as is sufficient to instruct them concerning the whole extent, and direct them in the whole course of their obedience to God; which therefore must undoubtedly supersede all necessity of considering the obligation, or attending to the precepts of the divine law as a rule of duty. All that we can infer, then, from the passage above-quoted when compared with the insinuations just now mentioned, is,

* Letters, p. 432.

that

that in relation to this, as almost every other point, the letter-writer is most shamefully inconsistent with himself. We must not take an estimate of his principles from any assertions which we find occasionally dropt in his letters, but from the general scope and purport of them, and especially from the doctrines which he shews the strongest inclination to oppose and vilify. It is no rare thing to find him now and then asserting, with great confidence, some scriptural truth, when yet, upon examination, we shall find, that it is the scope of a great part of his performance to undermine and overthrow it. By this artifice he endeavours to impose upon the weak, and has artfully seduced some; but we would humbly advise all such as may read his letters, and would not be deceived in matters of the greatest importance, to take nothing he says upon trust; neither to admit it as *truth*; for that he seldom speaks but with a view to colour over and propagate some pernicious *lie* or other; nor yet as any *genuine indication* of his own sentiments: for he often appears to assert a truth, and repeats it over and over again with great confidence, when he means the quite contrary*. In short, we are now so well acquaint-

ed

* Thus, for instance, how often in his letters does he seem to affirm, that guilty sinners ought to trust to Christ's work *alone* as the ground of their acceptance with God; yet when he comes to explain himself a little more clearly near the end of his book, we find he all along meant, that they ought never to confide in it *at all*, but found their hopes of acceptance with God and eternal salvation *primarily*, and indeed *only*, upon some of their own good qualities of actions; such as love to the truth and acts of self-denied obedience. When he would have us to renounce all dependance on our own good works, upon examination, we find his meaning

ed with him, that we dare venture to affirm there are very few things that he will scruple either to affirm or deny, yea both to affirm and deny upon occasion, when he imagines it will any way make for his purpose.

It is now time to bring this essay to a period; which I shall do after I have considered one other article of *Palæmon's creed* that is full as wide of the truth, and repugnant to the apostolic gospel, as any of the former. It is as follows.

ARTICLE XX.

*B*Elievers, on account of their good works performed after conversion, may justly claim eternal life, not only as a reward of grace, but also as a reward of debt; yea, every honest or sincere attempt to please God is sufficient to found a title to everlasting happiness.

REMARKS.

IT may seem strange, that the author of the letters, who pretends to shew such an uncommon zeal for the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and talks in such high strains concerning the sovereignty of divine grace, should attribute so much to the works of charity and self-denied obedience performed by them who believe and love the truth. It is more

meaning is only, that we ought to renounce that faith which trusteth in God through Jesus Christ for justification without works. An attentive reader will find a multitude of other instances similar to these in our author's performance.

Strange

strange still, that he should do so after he had given some broad hints insinuating, that there is no such thing as any *inherent* righteousness, holiness or sincere obedience to the law of God to be found among men. But so inconsistent is this writer with himself, that it is no rare thing to find him asserting, with great confidence, in one part of his performance, what he denies, with equal assurance, in another. When affecting to shew his zeal for the honour of the divine sovereignty manifested in justifying and saving sinners only on account of the imputed righteousness, he carries the matter so far as plainly to insinuate, that it wholly supersedes the necessity of repentance, holiness and obedience to the law of God, or indeed any change to the better; — and that those with whom any such thing is found can have no occasion for it; because, in this case, they may claim everlasting happiness as due to them according to the tenor of the law of works. He tells us, “ That God in the law assures every man, who shall sincerely repent, or turn from his evil way, and do that which is lawful and right, that he shall be happy, and no mention made of his former faults:” and for proof of this he quotes *Ezek.* xxxiii. 10, 11. A little after he expresses himself in the following manner. “ The field then is left fair and open for every one who wills, to run. Every let or hindrance, every objection which the reasoning faculty of man can frame, is entirely removed. — Let all the well-disposed, all the friends of virtue avail themselves of the free declaration; God himself hath set his oath to it, that every one who turns from evil to good, shall be happy. — He who does this, may warrantably expect all countenance and en-

“ cou.

" couragement from his Maker, whose pleasure
 " ever lies on the side of righteousness *."
 In another place *Palemom* speaks in this manner :
 " He who can say, *I feel an aversion to sin, and prize*
 " *the holy law above all things : the prevailing bias of*
 " *my affections is to the divine law, and the habitual*
 " *breathing of my soul after a conformity to its precepts;*
 " *is I think in a fair way to fulfil the law, so as*
 " *to live by his own obedience ; according to what*
 " *is said, Ezek. xxxiii. 14—19. If the wicked turn*
 " *from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right,*
 " *— he shall surely live, — he shall not die ; none of his*
 " *sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto*
 " *him : he hath done that which is lawful and right,*
 " *he shall surely live, — he shall live thereby †.*"

From these passages and others of like import which we meet with in the letters on *Theron*, &c. I think it is evident, that, according to *Palemom*, either there is no such thing as true holiness and sincere obedience to be found with any of mankind, believers or unbelievers ; or that whoever are possessed of the former, and enabled, however weakly, to perform the latter, they are thereby intitled to everlasting happiness, and may claim it as a just debt, due to them for their own holiness and obedience, according to the tenor of that covenant he has been pleased to make with them ; promising to reward with everlasting life not only a course of obedience to his law finally persisted in, but every honest or sincere attempt to please him.

That God has bound himself to reward the least degree of sincere obedience with happiness, the letter-writer expressly affirms, in the passage formerly quoted. And in a note at the bottom of p. 10.

* Letters, p. 90, 91.

† P. 89.

which

which we had occasion to take some notice of under another head, he tells us, "He is far from thinking, that any honest or sincere attempt to please God, ever failed of success; and "that he is ready to shew, that all objections and impediments have been, by a particular edict for that purpose, removed and dispensed with in favour of all who are sincerely well-disposed, whenever they shall be found." The passage in the letters which this note refers to is as follows. "Every attempt now to become righteous before God, and much more every imagination that God would assist him," the sinner, "in any such attempt, behoved to be criminal in man, and to carry in it a dishonourable reflection against his Creator and Judge, as if he could be pleased with an imperfect righteousness, or a righteousness stained with sin."

Here the letter-writer plainly asserts, that to imagine God can be pleased with an imperfect righteousness, or a righteousness stained with sin, carries in it a dishonourable reflection against the Creator and righteous Judge of all the earth: yet in the note above-mentioned he immediately adds, "I am far from thinking, that any honest or sincere attempt to please God, ever failed of success."—This methinks is as much as to say, that though God cannot be pleased with an imperfect righteousness, yet we should be far from thinking, that he will not be pleased with a very imperfect one, wherever it can be found. Is it possible to reconcile these contradictory assertions? Can they both be true? If they may, it must be for ever impossible to prove any thing to be either true or false; for according to this method of reasoning, it may be either or neither, or both, just as we please.

The

The genuine import of the assertion in the note before-mentioned, when compared with the passage referred to in the text, must plainly be this ; ‘ I have been just now saying, that to imagine God can be pleased with an imperfect righteousness, or a righteousness stained with sin, would be criminal in man, and carry in it a dishonourable reflection against his Creator and Judge ; yet I am far from thinking, that this is true : for still I am at liberty to suppose, that God may be pleased with a very imperfect righteousness, or a righteousness that has not only manifold defects, but is stained with a multitude of sins ; yea with the most imperfect righteousness that can be conceived of, even the weakest and most inconsiderable attempt to please God, provided it be honest or sincere.’ It would be vain to attempt to reconcile these assertions so manifestly contradictory to each other, by alledging, that it is no less impossible to find among unbelievers any who are sincerely well-disposed, or honestly attempting to please God, than it would be to find any one fulfilling the whole law : for the question is not, whether any such righteousness can be found with unregenerate sinners ? but, if it was possible to find it, whether they could warrantably bottom any claim to the divine favour or everlasting happiness upon the same ? or, in other words, the question is not, whether God can be pleased with a righteousness that is nowhere to be found, or, which is the same thing, with no righteousness at all, whether perfect or imperfect ; but supposing that an imperfect and defective righteousness was to be found with any of the sons of men, the question is, whether God would be pleased with it so as to admit them into favour, and reward them with happiness on account of it ?

This

This *Palæmon* both denies and affirms in plain terms; for he tells us, that the very imagination of such a thing would necessarily carry in it a dishonourable reflection against God; and yet immediately after declares he is ready to shew, that all objections and impediments which men may be apt to make against the possibility of such a method of acceptance with God, have been, by a particular divine edict for that purpose, removed and dispensed with in favour of all who are sincerely well-disposed, whenever they shall be found. And, says he, "Let all the friends of virtue avail themselves of the free declaration; God himself hath set his oath to it, that every one who turns from evil to good," and we may add, who is sincerely well-inclined *, "shall be happy †." Elsewhere *Palæmon* tells, that such well-disposed persons as are desirous to perform acceptable obedience to the divine law, have no occasion to trouble their heads about the gospel. The reason is plain; because they have no occasion for, or stand in no need of the divine righteousness revealed therein, being already possessed of a righteousness of their own, which is sufficient to procure, or intitle them to the favour of God, and true happiness. Now it is all one, by our author's own confession, whether they acquire that righteousness, or the good disposition spoken of, by their own endeavours, or by the assistance and supernatural operation of the divine Spirit, provided they are only possessed of it. If they have once obtained it any how, they may plead it as a ground of acceptance with God, and with confidence claim the possession of eternal happiness as due to them on account of it, by vir-

* For our author tells us, afterward in the same page, that as for those who are sincerely well-inclined; he has no doubt but they will do that which is lawful and right.

† Letters, p. 91.

tue of the divine promise, oath and covenant, whereby God hath bound himself thus to accept and reward all with whom such a righteousness is to be found, or who sincerely desire and endeavour to please him.

Here, I think, the letter-writer hath strained the point in a manner unprecedented, and truly extraordinary : for though it is readily granted, that unbelievers, or men in an unregenerate state, are void of all good desires and dispositions, every thought, inclination, and imagination of their hearts, being evil and only evil continually ; so that they can no more honestly, or in the manner that the law requires, attempt to please God, than they can yield perfect obedience to all his commands ; yet I think it can hardly be allowed, that this is the case with believers. Palæmon acknowledges that they who know and believe the truth, love God, and keep his commandments, will be ready to run all risks upon it ; which is, doubtless, somewhat more than the least honest or sincere attempt to please God. He carries the matter still farther when he affirms, that no man, however sound his profession of the faith may be, can enjoy that life which lies in God's favour, farther than he loves God and keeps his commandments ; and that no man can be assured, that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as he is freed from sin and led to work righteousness : and again tells us, that we must still maintain, " that the favour of God can only be enjoyed in studying to do those things which are pleasing in his sight."

In these and the like passages the letter-writer acknowledges, that one who is already a believer of the gospel, has not only undergone a change to the better, or sincerely repented of his evil ways, and turned from evil to good, but has it for his chief study and constant aim, to do those things that are well-

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well-pleasing in the sight of God; it must therefore, according to his hypothesis, unavoidably follow, that every believer has a just claim to eternal happiness, founded on his own righteousness and acts of obedience to the divine law, or according to the tenor of the law of works, in which, he tells us, God assures every man who shall sincerely repent, or turn from his evil way, and do that which is lawful and right, that he shall be happy, and no mention made of his former faults. Hence it evident that, according to our author, the faith of the gospel, however it may agree with the love and practice of sin, is altogether inconsistent with the love, study and practice of holiness: because, if we may believe him, when these are found with any one he has no occasion for the gospel: nor can he either believe or love it, if, as there is no difference between "man's pride in equal to his worth," and "the way of God, will always appear unequal, in some respect or other, in the eyes of the well-inclined."

In short, according to this author's notion, the good works or acts of self-denied obedience performed by believers after conversion, do as much merit everlasting happiness as Adam's obedience could have done had he persisted in his integrity, or continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Accordingly, the letter-writer scruples not to affirm, "that such is the connection betwixt every good work and its reward, that, according to the Scripture, the justice of God, not to say his grace, is concerned to make it good." For proof of this he quotes, *Heb. vi. 10. Matt. xii. 27. Mark ix. 41.* texts which Popish writers have commonly made use of, or rather wrested to establish their erroneous doctrine concerning the merit of good works.

* See Letters, p. 92. † Letters, 356, 357.

If we may believe our author, God is bound in justice to reward the good works performed by believers with everlasting happiness ; and what could the most bigotted *Catholic* or haughty *merit-monger* say more ? Some of the most learned and zealous contenders for the *merit* of good works among the *Romanists* acknowledge, that they could not be meritorious, had not God by a free covenant made with man for that purpose, or by his own promise, bound himself to reward them with everlasting happiness ; because men are naturally and necessarily bound to obey whatever commands God may be pleased to lay upon them, or do whatever he requires, without any reward *. But from any thing *Palæmon* has thought proper to advance in relation to this point, the reader cannot certainly determine what kind of merit he attributes to good works ; but is left at liberty to conclude, that he holds them to be meritorious in the strictest and most proper sense, in the sense of the most lofty merit-mongers ; who contend that good works performed by believers merit a reward, not only by virtue of the divine paction and promise, but even on account of their own intrinsic worth and excellency.

However, we shall suppose, that the letter-writer contends only for a kind of merit by paction, which, as we have already observed, is all that some learned doctors of the *Romish* church understood by the word *merit* ; yet it is plain, that to affirm

* *Non defant qui conseruant, opera bona iustorum esse meritoria vita eterna ex condigno, ratione operis, etiamque nulla extortae divina conuentio : ita Cajetanus, & Dominicus a Soto. Alii contra existimant, non esse illa meritoria ex condigno ratione operis, sed tantum ratione pacti, & acceptationis divinae : ita Scouras, cum aliis e veteribus scholasticis, & ex recentioribus Andreas Vega : Bellarmin.*

that

that good works are meritorious even in this sense, is in effect to overthrow the whole doctrine of the gospel concerning free justification and salvation through the imputed righteousness. For if God by any covenant made with man has bound himself to reward their good works and sincere obedience with everlasting life, believers must be saved by works, as really as *Adam* would have been intitled to everlasting happiness upon his fulfilling the terms of the first covenant, or that covenant which God made with him in a state of innocence. Thus we must invert the apostle's reasoning with regard to the law and the promise, which I presume will be allowed to contain the substance of the apostolic gospel; and instead of saying with him, *If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise,* we must affirm, that as God has in his law and by his oath established a connection betwixt good works, yea the least degree of sincere obedience, and everlasting happiness, and his justice is concerned to make it good; *the inheritance is of the law,* and consequently *no more of promise;* neither did God give it to *Abraham* by promise: for, according to our author, we must still maintain, that the promise is made to those only who love God and keep his commandments.

It must be owned, that in Scripture eternal happiness, in regard to believers, is frequently spoken of under the notion of a *reward*; that God has promised to reward the good works performed by them, and all the sufferings they undergo in his service and for his name's sake; and that his rewarding them thus, is in the Sacred Writings represented as an *act of righteousness* as well as *grace**: but, sure, we cannot from thence infer, that any reward, and

* 2 Thes. i. 5, 7. Heb. vi. 10.

far less that so great a reward as eternal happiness is due to their services and sufferings according to the rules of *commutative* justice; or that God has bound himself, by any covenant or promise, to bestow the reward of everlasting life *on account* of any good works performed by them. To affirm any such thing would be highly derogatory to the merits of Christ, make good works the cause and condition of salvation, and could not fail to lay a foundation for boasting, which is wholly excluded by the law of grace: — yet, this would be in express terms to contradict the Scriptures, wherein it is declared, that eternal life is bestowed on believers, not as in any way due to them, on account of good works done by them, or any good qualifications they are possessed of, but *as a free gift of God, through Jesus Christ*, who said, *He that cometh shall obtain; but he that cometh not after me of his own accord, but of grace*. God is not ungrateful for popular merit and labour of love; nor said he was bound in justice to reward the gains, or no if any thing they do could merit eternal happiness, either in a proper sense or by virtue of any promise or covenant God has made with them; but because the divine righteousness imposed on them, is strictly meritorious of all that happiness which God has promised to put them in possession of, and therefore his justice as well as mercy is engaged for, and infallibly secures their complete salvation.

The righteousness of the Surety being imputed to them to all the ends and purposes of salvation, as really as if they had wrought it out in their own persons, the justice of God is no less concerned to bring them to the full possession of the promised inheritance, than if they had merited it by their own

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Personal righteousness and obedience. To impute this righteousness is a pure act of grace; but to bestow eternal life on those to whom it is imputed, is as much an act of justice as it would be to reward them with everlasting happiness on account of a righteousness, answering all the demands of the law, wrought out in their own persons; because the imputation thereof makes it as really theirs, and the reward merited by it as really due to them, as if they themselves had fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and merited everlasting life by their own obedience to the divine law.

It may be farther observed, that the righteousness of God in Scripture frequently denotes his faithfulness and veracity manifested in accomplishing his promises^{*}; and therefore when it is said, that God is not *unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love performed by his people,* the meaning may be, that he will be faithful to his promise, and do as he hath said. And when eternal happiness is promised as a reward, and at the same time declared to be the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, all that we can infer from thence, is, that God, for the encouragement of his people when engaged in a course of self-denied obedience to his law and sufferings for his name's sake, has promised freely to bestow what will more than counterbalance all their services and sufferage in this world, though they have no manner of claim to such a reward founded on any personal merit or obedience to his law; or that God has graciously undertaken to give them a reward proportionable, in some respect, to the good works performed by them in this life, which neither is, nor can be due to them, according to any rules of commutative justice, for which he is no way bound in

* Psal. xxxi. 1. xxix. 40, 75, 123. Isai. xlvi. 6, &c.

justice to confer upon them, any further than that glorious attribute becomes engaged for the performance of his own gracious promise.

To maintain, with Papists, that the reward does in its own nature imply some kind of merit, is in effect to deny what the apostle expressly affirms, namely, that *the REWARD is not of debt, but of grace*. If the word *grace* can be supposed to have any meaning, a reward of grace must doubtless denote something that the person who receives it has no manner of claim to, but what is founded on the free and gracious promise of God in Christ, without regard to any thing done by the believer himself, as any way intitling him thereto; something that is every way *gratuitus and free*, in respect of which God is debtor to none but himself. Hence the apostle plainly intimates, that the salvation of believers, as well as their justification, is *wholly* of grace. Grace begins, grace carries on, grace completes the work. The reward is promised, and it is bestowed only in the way of grace, without the least respect to any merit or worthiness in the receiver. In one word, **GRACE REIGNS THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS UNTO ETERNAL LIFE, BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD***.

If it should still be pleaded, that the very notion of a reward does imply some kind of proportion between the good works and services performed by believers in this world, and the happiness which awaits them in the other world, we do not refuse it; but, then, it is only a proportion of *merit*, *order* or *connection*; such as that between *seed-time* and *harvest*, the *earnest* and the *inheritance*, the beginning and the end or *completion* of any thing, or salvation begun and salvation perfected; for here no propor-

* Rom. v. 21.

tion of *merit*, or *equality*, can by any means take place.

If we may believe *Palæmon*, grace reigns only in justification, before the sinner is capable of performing any good works or acts of self-denied obedience; and immediately after resigns the throne to personal merit: or the gospel, so soon as one believes it, consigns him over to the law; so that he must either be saved by his own obedience, or perish eternally for his disobedience: but the inspired apostle gives us a very different account of the matter when he tells us, That grace REIGNS through *righteousness*, not in justification only, but UNTO ETERNAL LIFE. All the purposes of God respecting the salvation of his chosen people, and the whole series of his dispensations toward them, from their first conversion to their complete glorification, are compared to a building of mercy; to intimate, that infinite grace, or sovereign mercy, REIGNS IN, and THROUGH ALL.

Were believers from eternity predestinated by God to everlasting life? they were predestinated according to the good pleasure of his will, and to the praise of the glory of his grace*. Are they in time called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ? they are called according to his own purpose and grace†. Are they justified? they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus‡. Are they sanctified? their sanctification is also according to his eternal purpose and grace; for God did from the beginning choose them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth||; and he saves them, not according to works of righteousness which they have done, but according to his mercy, by the

* Eph. i. 5, 6. † 2 Tim. i. 9. ‡ Rom. iii. 24.
|| 2 Thes. ii. 13.

washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost *. Do they perform good works and sincere obedience to the divine law? it is rather the grace of God with them inclining and powerfully determining them to perform, as well as assisting them in all acts of holy obedience, than they themselves that do them †. If they abound in acts of charity and self-denied obedience, it is because God has first made all grace abound towards them ‡. In a word, They are SAVED by grace §. In their salvation, from first to last, grace reigns, maintains the throne and sways the scepter; is manifested, magnified and glorified, in their justification, sanctification, and complete salvation. Mercy lays the foundation, raises the whole superstructure, and puts the top-stone upon the spiritual building. Divine, sovereign mercy lays the last, as well as the first stone in this glorious fabric §.

We may then put the question, Where is merit? It is undoubtedly excluded. By what law? not by any law which assures men, that if they repent and do that which is lawful and right, they shall undoubtedly be happy, or that God will reward them with everlasting life for every honest or sincere attempt to please him, but by the law of grace, which promises nothing as a reward of merit, but all as the free gift of God, through Christ. The humble believer, when he has finished his work and labour of love upon earth, dares not say, as the letter-writer would teach him, 'Lord, I have done my work, give me my wages, which thou canst not in justice withhold;' but his song through eternity will be, Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercy, and, for thy truth's sake.

* Tim. iii. 5. † 1 Cor. xv. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. ix. 7, 8.
§ Ephes. ii. 8. § Psal. lxxxix. 1, compared with
Zachariah. 7.

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But belike *Palamon* is a man of honour, of the same mind with *Bellarmino*, who says, " It is more honourable to receive a benefit," and consequently eternal happiness, " as the reward of merit, than in the way of free gift or by the mere favour of the donor * ;" or perhaps he has imbibed the sentiments of the lofty *Tappenus*, another Popish writer, who is pleased to speak in the following manner. " Far be it, that the righteous should expect eternal life as a poor man does an alms; for it is much more glorious to possess it as a honorary reward due to their own arduous labour and painful endeavours; after the manner of those victorious heroes who, on account of their gallant exploits in the field of battle, are justly intitled to laurels and triumphs †."

Such haughty airs and confident boasting, do well enough become those who by working in the way of painful desire and fear expect to be crowned with enjoyment, as the just reward of their labours; but I am persuaded every sober Christian, instead of imitating them, will rather chuse to say with *Augustine*, " Christ alone suffered punishment for us, without any sin in him; that we through him might obtain eternal happiness, without any merit in us ‡; " and, " When the reward of eternal life

* *Magis bonificum est habere aliquid ex merito, quam ex sola donatione.* *Bellarmin. lib. de justific. cap. iii.*

† *Absit ut iusti vitam eternam expectent, sicut pauperes hominum: multo namque gloriiosius est, ipsos quae virtores & triumphatores eam possidere, tanquam palmarum fructus adoribus debitam.* *Tappar. in art. Lovan. tom. ii. art. 9.*

‡ *Christus pro nobis solus suscepit sine triialis meritis penitentiam, ut nos per ipsum sine bonis meritis consequemur indebitam gratiam.* *August. lib. 4. ad Bonifac. cap. 4.*

" is bestowed at last; God will crown his own gifts,
" not thy merits *;" or with *Bernard*, " The
" mercy of the Lord is my merit; I am not altoge-
" ther destitute of merit so long as he is not desti-
" tute of mercy †."

What *Palemon* has insinuated concerning the reward of eternal happiness bestowed on believers in the other world, as being a just debt due to them on account of their own works of charity and self-denied obedience performed in this life ‡, would almost make one suspect what I hear some have affirmed, namely, that he must certainly be a jesuit: for what he teaches on this subject has not only a great affinity, but is indeed the very same with the doctrine of the *Romish* church concerning the merit of good works. But I am rather inclined to think he must be some opinionative, haughty *Glasseite*, who

* ————— Cum præmium venerit, sua dona coronabit,
non merita tua. Idem in Psal. lxx. Cantic. ii.

† Misericordia præiudicat meritum miserationis Domini; non plane
meriti: cum tempore, quamdiu ille miserationem non fuerit.
Bernard. Serm. lxi. in Cantic.

‡ Had this author consulted some learned *Papists*, they would have taught him to express himself with more modesty in relation to this point. At present we shall only instance in the two famous cardinals *Contarini* and *Gajetan*. The former, when commenting on Rom. vi. 23, thus writes: " Notandum hic quod iuruit
" angelus; ex justitia peccato debet mortum, vitam au-
" tem eternam esse ex dono Dei gratuito." The latter, viz. *Gajetan*, speaks in the following manner. " Non
" dicit," nempe apostolus, " quod stipendia justitiae
" vita eterna: ut intelligamus, non ex nostris meritis,
" sed ex gratiis Dei dono, aequi nos pro fine vitam eternam,
" propter quod si subdit, in Christo Iesu: exco me-
" ritum, exco justitia cuius stipendum est vita eterna: ne-
" lis autem est donum, ratione ipsius Christi Iesu."

through a violent antipathy and spiteful opposition to some eminent preachers of the gospel, which perhaps may easily be accounted for by those who know the manner of the man, and the disposition of some he is nearly connected with, finding no other occasion against them, has thought fit to nibble and cavil at their doctrine, on purpose to render their character as odious as might be, and thus has unawares fallen headlong into the very whirl-pool of the *Popish* doctrine concerning justification by works.

The amount of what he teaches on this head, is plainly this; that though a stout-hearted obstinate and rebellious sinner, while he remains and resolves to continue such, can only find relief and encouragement in the practice of wickedness by what the gospel declares concerning the *atonement*; yet whenever there is the least change from sin to holiness, though no more but a sincere attempt to please God, found with any man, he is thereby furnished with a just claim to the favour of God and everlasting happiness, and therefore has no more occasion for the imputed righteousness, or what the gospel reveals concerning the *atonement*. For the letter-writer tells us, "this was never intended to improve the righteous, and elevate them to a higher condition; but to relieve the wretched"; and elsewhere he plainly intimates, as we have seen already, that those who have truly repented of their sins, and honestly attempt to please God, are sustained as righteous in the sight of God according to the tenor of the law of works †.

A believer, especially one whose "love has al-ready wrought in the way of painful desire and fear so as to be crowned with enjoyment," needs not then trouble himself about the gospel, or any

* Letters, p. 295.

† P. 91, 92.

report it brings concerning the atonement and divine righteousness; for he is already possessed of a personal righteousness which does sufficiently intitle him to happiness. There is such a connection established betwixt the good works he has already wrought and their reward, namely, everlasting life, that the justice of God is concerned to make it good. Yea, further, by his own sincere, though imperfect obedience, he has already fulfilled the terms of that law or covenant of works, in which, *Palæmon* tells us, God has bound himself by his promise and oath to confer everlasting happiness for the least degree of sincere obedience. And I am apt to think, that one who has such a good claim to everlasting life, founded upon his own obedience and personal righteousness, will scarce be so modest and self-denied as wholly to renounce it, and acknowledge himself solely indebted to the righteousness of another for his title to everlasting happiness. Indeed I see no reason why he should; and *Palæmon* will agree with me in affirming, that such an uncommon degree of self-denial never can be found with any of the human race; for his maxim is, *That every man's pride is equal to his worth.* And he tells us,

" that the Scripture itself does not strip men of
 " their self-confidence, without divesting them of
 " every pretence to it, without convincing them
 " that they have no fund for it. It convinces
 " them," says he, " that they are poor, indigent,
 " guilty sinners; that they are so in reality, and
 " nothing else. It does not admit, that they have
 " any amiable qualifications to abate the force of
 " this charge, and then leave it to their own pene-
 " tious condiscernment to forego the consideration of
 " them."

* Letter, p. 45.

If

If we may believe *Palaemon*, then, the Scripture itself does not oblige his humble, self-denied, and working believers, to renounce all confidence in their own righteousness and good qualifications, as if these were insufficient to procure the divine favour and acceptance, and to intitle them to everlasting happiness. If they have any amiable qualifications, they may according to him boast of them as much as they please; because the Scripture no where forbids them. The apostolic gospel excludes all boasting, and makes it criminal for believers to glory in their highest attainments *; but it seems *Palaemon's* gospel gives full liberty to all who are possessed of any good qualifications, as undoubtedly every true believer is, to confide and glory in them as a ground of acceptance with God; and what does as really intitle them to everlasting happiness, as if they had yielded perfect obedience to the divine law.

If it should be objected, that the letter-writer acknowledges, that every true believer "is sensible, that the atonement is the sole spring of all his self-denied love, and of all the present comfort as well as future reward connected with it; and knows that all his holiness, as well as all his happiness, comes entirely of that grace which provided the momente †;" it is granted he does so; but what does this concession amount to? According to his hypothesis, it cannot possibly imply any more than this; that the grace which provided the momente, is in so far the spring of all true holiness and happiness, that it is wholly owing thereto that men are put in a condition to merit everlasting life by their own good works and sincere obedience, or, as our author loves to speak, by the self-denied

* Rom. iii. 27. † Cor. i. 31. chap. iv. 7. Philip. iii. 12, 13. † Letter, p. 429.

labour of charity ; which is nothing different from what *Papists* teach when they tell us that the first justification is by grace and faith only, but the second justification also by works ; or that it is owing to the merit of Christ that the good works performed by believers do merit any thing at the hand of God : and from what has been already observed it appears, that many of them are abundantly more orthodox with regard to this point than the letter-writer.

That we have not mistaken the sense of the passage above-quoted, is evident from our author's own words, who endeavours to illustrate it by a similitude pertinent enough to his purpose, in the following manner. " The merchant who, being encouraged by some credible intelligence providence has favoured him with from an unexpected quarter, sets out at all hazards on some new branch of traffick, will be greatly animated to proceed, when he finds his labours crowned with success : and he will always reflect with satisfaction on the happy occasion that first gave him the advantageous hint."

From these words it is evident, that, according to our author, the gospel only gives the advantageous hint to the guilty, that notwithstanding the sentence of condemnation already passed against them by the divine law and confirmed by their own consciences, salvation is still attainable, provided the gospel can only have so much influence upon them, as to excite them to set about working in the way of painful desire and fear, till they be crowned with enjoyment ; that is, in short, the gospel puts them in a fair way to obtain eternal happiness by their own works of charity, sincere and self-denied obedience. What could the most bigotted *Papist* say more for establishing the merit of good works ?

What

What could the most corrupt *Socinian* say less in commendation of the divine grace revealed in the gospel? Both the one and the other would no doubt ascribe as much to the grace of God as *Palæmon* does here, and imagine they might do so too in full consistency with their own principles.

We have already heard *Palæmon* affirming, that believers after justification are as liable to wrath and condemnation for every sin they commit, as they were before, or indeed as any man can be: and from what has been observed on this head it appears, that according to our author, justification affords them no sure claim to everlasting happiness; for this must be acquired afterwards by the labour of charity and acts of self-denied obedience.

All therefore he can mean by justification, is a sinner's being so graciously dealt with for the sake of Christ, or in consequence of his making atonement for sin, as to be put upon a new trial for obtaining eternal happiness by his own obedience: and that such a justification as this is obtained by grace, or by faith without works, is what no *Papist* will deny.

There is indeed this difference between the letter-writer and the *Romanists*, that while they maintain the necessity of *inherent grace*, and some supernatural assistance, for qualifying and enabling men to perform good works, or acts of charity and self-denied obedience; this he denies, and plainly insinuates, that a mere notion of the truth is sufficient to produce all those salutary effects which have been hitherto, agreeably to Scripture, said to proceed from the special operation of divine grace upon the soul; and that instead of being created in Christ Jesus unto good works by the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are both renewed and sanctified by a notion, or by the simple belief of the bare truth,

without any other supernatural influence. Hence it is manifest, that all Palæmon's high-sounding words about the atonement, imputed righteousness, the sovereignty of divine grace, justification by grace, or by faith without works, &c. are only so much unmeaning cant or unintelligible jargon, intended to amuse and confound the mind of a weak and ignorant reader, and give the author an opportunity to instil into the minds of the simple those pernicious tenets and opinions, by maintaining which a certain society of Separatists in North-Britain have thought proper to distinguish themselves from all other professors of Christianity. But his artifices are so easily discernable, that it is hoped few who have any tolerable acquaintance with the Scriptures and the Protestant doctrine agreeable thereto, will suffer themselves to be imposed upon by them. Unhappily for him, his extraordinary scheme carries its own confutation along with it, being full as inconsistent with itself, as with the Scriptures or the apostolic gospel. And perhaps it may with more reason be affirmed of him than of any other heretic, who has at any time infested the Christian church, that he is condemned of himself.

I heartily wish this author had given less occasion for applying to him that infamous character which the apostle gives of one who consents not to, but cavils at and contradicts wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, namely, that he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wrangling disputings of men of corrupt minds, and doubtful of the truth. However it is hoped that whatever men of this wrangling, perverse, and impious disposition are found, every sober Christian

tian will call to mind, and put in practice the apostolic exhortation, *From such withdraw thyself**.

We have now considered some of the most material articles of that new creed which the author of the letters on *Theron* and *Affasio* has, with unparalleled confidence, endeavoured to obtrude upon the Public under the specious title of the ancient apostolic gospel; and I hope the intelligent and impartial reader, by this time, will easily perceive, that far from meriting that honourable appellation, it is nothing else but a confused jumble of *Pelagian*, *Popish*, *Socinian* and *Antinomian* errors, blended together with a little art, and interspersed now and then with some fantastical notions peculiar to the leaders of that new society of *sectaries* in *Scotland*, among whom the letter-writer has of late made such a distinguished figure.

To take particular notice of all the unscriptural tenets and opinions advanced and inculcated in the letters on *Theron*, &c. would be a task both tedious and endless; as it would require a particular explication and vindication of almost all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel which that author has either directly impugned, or disguised, perverted, and prostituted to the basest purposes. That he sometimes speaks truth, cannot be denied: and we do allow, that there are some valuable truths which he sometimes appears to set in a very clear and strong light; but then, it is equally certain, that, like another well known adversary to the truth, he never speaks *truth* but with an intention to recommend and support some favourite *lie* or other. I do not pretend to judge his secret intentions, but those only which are manifest, and ly open to the view of every attentive and judicious reader,

* 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4, 5.

A variety of instances might be adduced to shew, that the charge above-mentioned, is far from being groundless or unjust; or, that when at any time *Palæmon* asserts and inculcates what is really truth, it is only that he may, with the greater facility and advantage, insinuate and instil into the minds of his readers, some one or other of his own erroneous sentiments, or bring some other truth into discredit. Thus when he affirms, again and again, in very strong terms, that the divine righteousness revealed in the gospel, is the sole reason of hope and all-sufficient to justification, which, if rightly understood, is doubtless a great truth, he does it evidently with a view to instil this false and pernicious notion into the mind of the reader; that the righteousness of Christ, or his bare work finished on the cross, is in such a manner all-sufficient to justification, as to exclude the use of all means of divine appointment, for bringing sinners to the knowledge of Christ and the way of salvation revealed in the gospel, and supersede all necessity of any internal and supernatural work of the divine Spirit upon the minds and hearts of men, in order to determine and enable them to believe on the name of the Son of God. He affects to extol and magnify *objective grace*, or the grace of God appearing in the atonement, with a manifest intention to depreciate all *subjective* or *inherent grace*; though it is abundantly evident from Scripture, that the latter is no less necessary to salvation than the former; or that the *application* of redemption by the special agency and powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, is equally necessary to the salvation of fallen men, with the *purchase* of redemption by the work which Christ finished on the cross.

Further;

Further; this author extolls what he calls the *simple truth*, or the divine testimony concerning Christ in the gospel, in opposition to the *faith* of that truth, or such an apprehension and persuasion of it, as is absolutely necessary in order to our enjoying the benefit and comfort of it. When he teaches the necessity of good works and self-denied obedience, he does it evidently with a design to gain credit to another pernicious lie, namely, that without these, or a consciousness of performing and being exercised in them, no man can attain to any personal and well grounded hope of eternal life, nor indeed any assurance of the forgiveness of sins: which, as we formerly hinted, is the very same with the old *Popish* error concerning justification by works; and is in effect to maintain, that evangelical obedience is not the fruit, but rather the cause and spring, or, to speak as the thing is, the very *ground and foundation* of justifying faith, or of any particular claim to the benefit of the divine righteousness. For the reader must carefully observe, that the assurance of hope, or of the forgiveness of sins, which *Palæmon* tells us does arise only from experience in the hearts of them who love God and keep his commandments, is immediately connected with what *Protestant* divines call justifying faith; as indeed it is what only can give relief to the conscience of a sinner disquieted with a sense of guilt and fears of future condemnation.

To talk of having a taste of forgiveness, or obtaining rest and relief to the guilty conscience, before the sinner is warranted to claim the benefit of the divine righteousness, or while he is entirely at the mercy of God for his salvation, as the letter-writer speaks, that is, every whit as uncertain about the forgiveness of his sins as he was before; having nothing on which he can warrantably, and with

safety bottom an assured hope of either ; is to talk at random, or one does not know what. It is just as if one should affirm, that a criminal under sentence of death, may be relieved from the fear of death, when yet for any thing he knows, or can know from any authentic intimation made to him, he is in as great hazard of dying as before, yea altogether uncertain whether the sentence may not be executed upon him the very next day, hour, or moment.

Palæmon also affects to talk much concerning the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom ; but it is evident, that his intention in so doing, is only to make way for the reception of a whimsical and extravagant notion of his own ; namely, that a concern about the external order and government of the church, and any laudable endeavours for promoting christian knowledge, and maintaining external purity, the purity of gospel-doctrine, worship, and other divine institutions, is altogether inconsistent with any just conceptions of the nature of the *Messiah's* kingdom, and a certain indication of zeal for the advancement of a worldly kingdom, as for a Jewish secular *Messiah* : which is not only a supposition manifestly false, but downright *scopy* ; a kind of fanaticism which can hardly be equalled but by the frantic notions of some old *Anabaptists* in *Germany*, or the levelling principles of some *ranting sectaries* in *England*, that gave so much disturbance to the government, both in church and state, about the middle of the last century, and were a grief of heart to all sober Christians in that period. Should such fanatical notions concerning the spirituality of Christ's kingdom be embraced, propagated, and generally received among professors of Christianity, they would soon prove no less, if not far more destructive

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tive to the true interests thereof, than all the worldly pomp, power, and tyranny of Antichrist's kingdom.

Were we to enumerate and insist upon particulars of this kind, which almost every where occur in the *Letters on Theron*, &c. it would be necessary to bring almost every page of that performance again under a review, and write another volume. But as my chief design in this essay was to vindicate some of those precious and important truths of the gospel, which the letter-writer has used his utmost efforts to pervert and overthrow, that he might insnare silly and unstable souls, and bring them into the same condemnation with himself; I shall not at present enter into any particular examination of those wild and extravagant notions which he has advanced concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the constitution and government of the Christian church. As the bare mentioning of them is sufficient to confute them, I shall only subjoin a short specimen of them, and then conclude this review. The following strange positions, then, are either advanced by *Paleros* in so many words, or evidently implied in some of his assertions.

The seat of the church's worship was translated from earth to heaven at Christ's ascension, where it has continued ever since*; — so that the spiritual and gracious presence of God in, and with his church, and the assemblies of his people on earth, is no where promised; and therefore can not warrantably be expected by his disciples.

Churches

* *Letters*, p. 117, 118.

† If the letter-writer does not affirm this in express terms; when he tells us, that the promises we meet with in Scripture respecting the divine residence, or the

Churches or meeting houses in which Christians usually assemble for the worship of God, are but a poor imitation of the temple of Jerusalem ;—and the pretended office of the ministry since the days of the apostles is only a poor shadow, or rather an absurd imitation of the Levitical priesthood long since abolished.

The author of a small treatise, intitled the *Testimony of the king of martyrs concerning his kingdom*, is the only writer, since the days of the apostles, who has rightly understood, and been able to shew clearly from the Scriptures the nature of Christ's kingdom : for though some others, particularly one learned prelate of the church of England, could tell what the kingdom of Christ is not, no one beside the author before-mentioned has been able to tell us what it really is.—National churches flourish or decay by the smiles or frowns of princes ; but the true church is established by the smile of the Most High.—No such thing as any national profession or establishment of Christianity is warrantable under the New Testament dispensation.—The true members of the church, or Kingdom of Christ, expect no revolution in their favour ; no more flourishing state of the church, nor any farther revival of religion and godliness, till Christ come the second time ; nor do they account any deliverance to the church worth the waiting for till then*.—To imagine that

gracious presence of God in his church and the worshiping assemblies of his people do lose all meaning, except when referred to the body of Jesus now in heaven, his words do necessarily imply as much. Letters, p. 137, 118.

* See Letters, p. 120, 121, 122—126, 127, 128, 129—133—136—138—140—157.

* there

‘ there will be some more flourishing appearance
‘ of the *Messiah's* kingdom in the latter days, or
‘ in this mortal state, by a general conversion of
‘ *Jews* and *Gentiles*, is only an old *rabbinical* no-
‘ tion, which has not the least foundation in the
‘ Scriptures.

‘ As to any particular form of ecclesiastical go-
‘ vernment instituted by Christ, or to be observed
‘ in the christian church, the New Testament is
‘ wholly silent.—All creeds and confessions of
‘ faith not expressed in the very words of Scripture,
‘ whether sound or unsound it matters not, have
‘ a native tendency to draw off the minds of
‘ Christians from any proper attention to the Scrip-
‘ tures themselves : and wherever the former are
‘ admitted, the latter of course must be laid aside,
‘ and give place to the wisdom of words, the wis-
‘ dom of the scribes and disputers of this world.

‘ — All Protestant churches and kingdoms
‘ united under one general profession of christia-
‘ nity, and one ecclesiastical form of government,
‘ are genuine daughters of *Babylon, the mother of*
‘ *babots*; and have found it for their interest to
‘ imitate the practices of their great mother, as
‘ far as the secular princes in whose keeping they
‘ were would permit them.

‘ The establishment of any false religion may
‘ be of as great advantage for promoting peace
‘ and order, and the external interests of any com-
‘ mon-wealth or kingdom, as the establishment of
‘ the true, or the christian : and it is absurd to
‘ imagine, that the religion taught by Jesus Christ
‘ and his apostles ever was, or can be established
‘ on the earth till the resurrection of the just *.

* See Letters, p. 129—138, 140, 143, 144.

The prevalence of infidelity, the little success of the gospel among the hearers of it, yea, the neglect and most avowed contempt of divine institutions, were never any cause of grief to the apostles; nor ought they to give any Christian the least uneasiness;—because it would ill become us to grudge men any liberties of that kind, while the author of nature and of the gospel suffers them*.—The ancient doctrine of the kingdom of heaven is as little regarded, and as much despised by the most orthodox Christians, as a lecture concerning sobriety would be by a company inflamed with wine.—Any concern about national reformation or grief for national sins and defections, for the decay of religion, the contempt of the gospel, and gospel-ministers, the open profanation of the Lord's day, the little frequenting of ordinances, the increase of infidelity, &c. do wholly proceed from carnal notions of Christ's kingdom; and are in reality no better than a murmuring against God and the King: and Christians by inburning for the sins of a professing people among whom they live, do only in this manner discover and gratify their own religious pride, while they take a kind of melancholy pleasure in reflecting that they are better than other people.

All disputes about church-government are trifling; and those who have been concerned in them on all sides, have only disputed who should be the greatest among Christians.—All complaints of the badness and darknes of the times are indolent and fruitless, and what no lover of the apostolic gospel has any occasion to join in †.

* Letters, p. 134, 144, compared with p. 103.

† P. 136, 137, 440—156, 439—157.

Christian

“ — Christian teachers, who call themselves
“ ministers of the gospel, by pretending to declare
“ the mind of God, and deliver his message, make
“ themselves almost God, and claim a kind of
“ worship almost equal to that which is due to the
“ Most High ; so that we cannot see God alone,
“ appearing to us in any work, but are left at the
“ mercy of these gentlemen to tell us what God
“ is ; what is his character, and what peculiar ho-
“ mage we must pay him : for, according to them,
“ we shall find little else in the Scripture, but some-
“ thing like the creed of our eastern neighbours,
“ *The great God, and Mahomet his prophet.*”

“ The Old Testament church was an earthly,
“ carnal church, and only a type of the true hea-
“ venly and eternal Theocracy ; which received
“ its form and establishment when Jesus was
“ anointed and seated on his throne, after his as-
“ cension to heaven.—The spiritual kingdom of
“ Christ was not formed or established till after
“ his resurrection and ascension into heaven ;—
“ and till then the patriarchs, prophets and saints,
“ who lived under the Old Testament economy,
“ were never incorporated into it †.

“ Those

“ Letters, p. 159.

† If the Saints under the Old Testament, who died in the faith of the *promise*, were not members of Christ, nor partakers of his Spirit, nor indeed incorporated into his kingdom till he was glorified, as *Palemon* plainly insinuates, p. 246, I think we can hardly allow, that they were admitted into the kingdom of heaven till then. Unless then we grant, with *Scribnians*, that their souls fell asleep with their bodies, and remained in a state of inactivity, at least, till Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, I do not see where they could be more conveniently placed than in the old *limbus patrum* of the *Papists*. Yet our author’s notion

‘ Those little independent societies which Mr. J. G. formed the model of, and began to erect in North Britain between thirty and forty years ago, are the only true apostolic christians this day in the world. They only are under the direction of the Spirit of truth, while all other societies of Christians are under the power and influence of the evil spirit ; so that if any writer in behalf of the ancient gospel would appeal to any for their approbation, it must be only to the consciences of the *Glaſſies* ; for they only know and love the truth, &c. *

These, with many other assertions and insinuations of a like nature to be met with in the letters on *Theron*, &c. being more like the wild reveries of a distempered imagination, than any thing else ; or, at best, only the froth and fume of *sectarian* pride, may well be dismissed without any farther notice. To spend time in making a reply to such frantic imaginations in the way of sober and cool reasoning, I am apt to think, would argue a degree of folly little inferior to that which appears in uttering them with an air of seriousness. For a like reason I have, for the most part, omitted to take any particular notice of the sarcastical and scurrilous remarks which the letter-writer has thought fit to make on several passages in the writings and sermons of those eminent divines whom he styles the popular preachers. His reflections of this kind are all along so senseless and

notion with regard to this point, for error and absurdity, does even exceed that of the *Papists* concerning the place allotted for the souls of departed saints before the coming of Christ : for when he adopts any erroneous notion he ordinarily improves upon it.

* See Letters, p. 231, 249.

impertinent, and the calumnies whereby he attempts to throw an *odium* upon the memory and character of those worthy men, so groundless and invidious, that to offer any serious confutation of them, I think would be extremely idle, if not ridiculous. What *Augustine* said to *Julian*, a noted disciple of *Pelagius*, would be a sufficient reply to all the scurrilous invectives he has thrown out against the doctrine and writings of those excellent preachers whom he appears to shew the most peculiar spite against : *Redde verba mea & evanescet calumnia tua*, “ let my words be but fairly repeated, “ and it will instantly appear, that your calumny is altogether groundless.”

I sincerely wish that this author may be reclaimed from the error and evil of his way, through the powerful influence of *that grace* which he hath so daringly, though I hope, in some respects ignorantly, vilified and blasphemed ; and then I doubt not but he will, more severely than any other would incline to do, condemn himself for the hard speeches which he has impiously uttered against the servants, work, ways, and truths of God. At any rate I think it would be advisable for him to bind himself to undergo the penance which it is said *Severus Sulpitius** imposed upon himself, after he had wofully abused his talents in defending the *Pelorian heresy*, by condemning himself to perpetual silence for the time to come. But if he should not be so wise as to stop his own mouth, we know who will shortly do it for him †.

In the mean time, all who know and love the truth, who favour the dust of *Zion*, and take pleasure in her rubbish and her stones, may comfort themselves with such reflections as these : Great is

* Some call him *Sulpitius Severus*. † *Psal. lxxii. 11.*

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the truth and will prevail : *The eyes of the Lord
are upon the truth. No weapon that is formed against
Zion shall prosper ; but every tongue that riseth up in
judgment against her, against the cause, the work,
truth, and servants of God, he will condemn.* When
*the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord
shall lift up a standard against him.* And in sa.,
*The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to
execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are
ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which
they have ungodly committed, and of all their HARD
SPEECHES, which UNGODLY sinners have spoken
against him. Amen.*

AP 53

F I N I S.

